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Official Records

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 40 (continued)

Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations, including special economic assistance

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/344)

- (a) **Strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations**

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/58/89, A/58/434)

- (b) **Special economic assistance to individual countries or regions**

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/58/133, A/58/224, A/58/225, A/58/273, A/58/280, A/58/285, A/58/286, A/58/358)

- (c) **Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster**

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/332)

- (d) **Participation of volunteers, "White Helmets", in the activities of the United Nations in the field of humanitarian relief, rehabilitation and technical cooperation for development**

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/320)

- (e) **Assistance to the Palestinian people**

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/88 and A/58/88/Corr.1)

The President: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I now call on the Observer of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. I take it that the meeting will allow the speaker to be heard in silence.

Mr. Gospodinov (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and its worldwide network draw on the debate and the resolutions which flow from it as the basis of our work with Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and all other actors. Needless to say, we listen to, coordinate and work with many United Nations partners, especially the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the World Food Programme, UNICEF, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations

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Population Fund (UNFPA) and other United Nations partners.

I am very pleased to present to the Assembly several issues that are of particular relevance to our work and, indeed, the work of Governments, United Nations bodies and all other stakeholders.

On international coordination — as our President said during the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in July this year — we believe that our debate must promote a holistic approach to the issues now confronting the international community. However, our experience shows that instead of a properly integrated approach to the programming, delivery and distribution of humanitarian assistance, there is often a patchwork of decisions based on considerations which have more to do with donor priorities than the needs of the vulnerable people.

We are pleased, however, that bodies such as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), in which the IFRC is a standing invitee, is addressing these issues and has shown a resolve to improve both coordination and the collaborative approach to response. Next year, for example, the IASC is expected to give high priority to the development of guidelines for humanitarian action in order to reduce vulnerability and protect livelihoods. The IFRC will play a significant part in that exercise, bringing to the table the experience it can draw from its global network at both the national and community levels.

With respect to linking relief to development, one of our key objectives in this debate is the acceptance by all States and other partners that emergency relief operations must be planned and undertaken with a long-term perspective. Only then will it be possible to link relief with development.

For many years, one of our key messages to the Assembly and other United Nations bodies has been that too little has been done to address local capacity-building in relief work. Through the IASC, we hope to bring more focused international attention to this area. The arrival of Mr. Jan Egeland as Emergency Relief Coordinator and Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs is an important element in this equation, and we look forward to working with him in a strong and cooperative partnership.

We also appreciate the determination of Mr. Egeland and his colleagues to focus — within

IASC — more actively on natural disasters. The IFRC has the lead, together with the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, of an IASC taskforce on preparedness and response to natural disasters. The work is aimed at enhancing inter-agency coordination and efficiency in the area of natural disasters.

The development of this holistic approach through work in the IASC and other bodies parallels a new and welcome understanding on the part of donors that being a donor is not enough — there is an overriding requirement to be a good donor. That is why the IFRC recently took part in the Good Donorship Conference in Stockholm, hosted by the Government of Sweden. It is also why we strongly support work in the IASC to set up its own inter-agency link with the good donorship implementation group, created as an outcome of the Stockholm Conference. The IFRC sees many parallels between this work and other work on humanitarian financing and accountability and looks forward to contributing to the discussions, both as an international organization and as a body capable of protecting the interests and concerns of beneficiaries.

This concern for beneficiaries is not, of course, new for us. Our network, and its base of some 95 million members and trained volunteers around the world, is widely recognized for its front-line work during disasters and health emergencies and in daily life as the promoter of respect for humanitarian values. We are continually strengthening our ability to put that expertise to work so that it directly impacts on the way assistance is programmed, delivered and distributed. We were therefore particularly pleased to be associated with the launch early this year of Humanitarian Accountability Partnership International. HAPI, as it is increasingly known, was the outcome of the Humanitarian Accountability Project hosted at the headquarters of the IFRC in Geneva. Its basic objective is to strengthen accountability towards those affected by crisis situations and to facilitate improved performance within the humanitarian sector.

The IFRC has also brought forward the concerns of beneficiaries in many other contexts over the years. This year, for example, the World Disasters Report — the world's flagship publication on disasters issues, published by the International Federation — focused on ethics in aid. Among the key messages of the World Disaster Report this year is the inequity which often accompanies assistance programming because of the

broad failure of some donors to act on the basis of sheer needs. That is one of the reasons why the IFRC devotes so much of its attention to the issues of what are commonly known as forgotten disasters. We are very pleased that Mr. Egeland is making forgotten emergencies a high priority and that he will be working with the media to that end.

It is also vitally important to recall in this debate that responding after the disaster has struck is not enough. Programmes, including at the national level in countries prone to disasters, must incorporate disaster risk reduction as a policy and programme highlight. That has been our priority for decades, and it has achieved the support of States, as was shown in the plan of action adopted at the twenty-seventh International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in 1999. But adopting plans of action is clearly not enough. There must be a willingness on the part of States to translate their commitments into policies and programmes. The IFRC will be seeking to build that willingness at the forthcoming twenty-eighth International Conference, at which Governments and national Red Cross and Red Crescent leaders will meet together in Geneva to decide on the Agenda for Humanitarian Action.

It is important to state here the three main foundations of that agenda, for they show our determination to go forward with this theme over the long term.

The first of those pillars endorses the concept and framework for international disaster response laws and for implementing appropriate legal, policy and operational measures to facilitate and expedite effective responses to disasters. This pillar of the foundation — international law relating to disaster response — relates very specifically to a contribution the IFRC is making to the strengthening of humanitarian coordination. Resolution 57/150, adopted after the debate on this item in 2002, affirms the Assembly's interest in the way this project is developing, and my delegation plans to deliver a substantive report on the issue in time for consideration in 2004. It will be able to encompass the conclusions reached by States and national societies at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent in December this year. Without wishing to prejudge the outcome, I can say that, through consultations with a very wide range of interested parties and stakeholders, we have learned that they

welcome the way the exercise is leading towards significant strengthening of coordination.

The President: In accordance with resolution 48/265 of 24 August 1994, I now call on the Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

Mr. Linati-Bosch (Sovereign Military Order of Malta): Thank you very much, Mr. President, for giving me the floor on behalf of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta. I am also grateful to you for your good work in directing the deliberations of this session.

The Sovereign Military Order of Malta has been closely following the initiatives of the United Nations aimed at providing emergency humanitarian assistance to countries affected by natural disasters and/or armed conflicts. The Order participates in activities aimed at alleviating the suffering of civilians in affected areas.

We especially share the anxiety of the United Nations with regard to the protection of its personnel and strongly condemn the unprovoked attacks in Baghdad in August 2003. The improvement of security conditions for personnel must be among the highest priorities. Allow me to add that the Sovereign Military Order of Malta is deeply concerned about the protection of its own humanitarian personnel when it participates in United Nations peacekeeping operations. Allow me, as a Permanent Observer, to observe that adequate measures for the protection of all humanitarian personnel could be included in the Security Council mandates.

The Order of Malta considers that, given its humanitarian principles, its neutrality, its impartiality and its independence, it has the credentials to continue its activities and, to the extent possible, improve its effectiveness in humanitarian aid that covers refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons.

There is no doubt that natural disasters cause grave humanitarian crises and that a significant portion of humanitarian assistance activities have as their goal to provide immediate relief to the victims. We are not denying that immediate help is imperative, but, as part of a more comprehensive position, we must include mitigation, prevention and reconstruction. In other words, we must not limit assistance to the immediate consequences of a catastrophic event.

The Order is convinced of this fact and has demonstrated its long-term commitment in many different contexts, from El Salvador to Iraq. In El

Salvador, the Order of Malta responded to the devastating earthquakes of 2001 by providing water-supply treatment plants and participating in the reconstruction work of the Departments of San Vicente, La Paz and Cuscatlan. More recently, in Iraq, the Order has been active in the northern towns of Erbil, Mosul, Makhmur and Kirkuk, by cooperating in programmes to rebuild social infrastructure.

To conclude, allow me to express the Sovereign Military Order of Malta's satisfaction at the appointment of Mr. Jan Egeland as the new Emergency Relief Coordinator and to reiterate the Order's commitment to continue to respond to the challenges that humanitarian work presents.

The President: In accordance with Assembly resolution 45/6 of 16 October 1990, I now call on the Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Mr. Villetta (International Committee of the Red Cross): The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) wishes to thank you, Mr. President, for giving it the opportunity to speak on the subject of humanitarian coordination, which it considers of vital importance in the conduct of humanitarian operations in complex situations.

The ICRC cannot but begin by noting, with extreme sadness and equal concern, that the current year has been profoundly tragic for the international community. While it was still grieving the deaths of three of its own personnel in Afghanistan and Iraq, the ICRC was appalled by the brutal attack perpetrated on the United Nations headquarters in Baghdad on 19 August. The ICRC strongly condemned this act of terror that targets civilians and wishes to reiterate here its heartfelt sympathy to the victims and their families and colleagues.

The complexity prevalent in most humanitarian crises, together with the sheer dimensions of the human suffering resulting from the numerous ongoing conflicts in the world, represent challenges that go far beyond the capacity of any single humanitarian organization. In this regard, the ICRC is deeply distressed to observe the heavy toll that continues to be paid by civilians, especially by the most vulnerable among them, including women and children.

Disease and starvation, displacement and separation, continue to wreck havoc on families and

communities. In an attempt to address these vast needs, an increasing number of humanitarian actors, with different mandates, areas of expertise and resources are present in humanitarian crises. Consequently, it is only natural that coordination has come to form an intrinsic part of humanitarian efforts, in order for such efforts to gain in overall effectiveness.

For the ICRC, the central aim of humanitarian coordination consists in seeking the greatest possible complementarity among all actors, flowing from their respective mandates, expertise and operating principles and procedures. Towards that end, the ICRC participates in coordination efforts through regular dialogue and mutual consultation, both at headquarters and in the field, on thematic issues and on operational questions. As a standing invitee of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), the ICRC, together with the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, participates in various coordination mechanisms and structures put in place by the IASC itself and by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), sharing experiences and information and thereby contributing to the common goal of rendering humanitarian action more effective.

Another example, at the bilateral level, would be fruitful exchanges with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) within the framework of the UNHCR 2004 process and the Agenda for Protection. In parallel, the ICRC participated actively in the preparation of the internally displaced persons (IDP) response matrix by OCHA's IDP unit. It also held a senior level meeting with the World Food Programme to actively explore possibilities of strengthening cooperation between the two organizations with regard to food assistance.

The International Committee of the Red Cross seizes this opportunity to thank Mr. Oshima for the cooperation extended to our institution and to express its best wishes to Mr. Egeland in the execution of his difficult and complex task.

While on the subject of humanitarian coordination, the ICRC wishes to stress its firm conviction that, in order to both ensure the security of humanitarian personnel and indeed render possible humanitarian operations for all victims of a conflict, political and military action ought to be kept imperatively distinct from humanitarian action. Were

the perceptions of humanitarian action as strictly neutral and independent to be altered by a blurring of the distinction between such action and political initiatives or military operations, the consequence would inevitably be greatly impeded access to victims and high security risks for humanitarian workers. In this perspective, coordination also signifies concerted efforts by all concerned to safeguard this vital humanitarian space and thereby protect humanitarian workers and victims alike.

In conclusion, the ICRC wishes to reaffirm its commitment to the spirit and practice of humanitarian coordination. The ICRC remains equally determined to fulfil the international mandate conferred on it by the Geneva Conventions and their Additional Protocols in relation to the protection and assistance of all victims of armed conflict.

The President: In accordance with the decision taken by the General Assembly at its thirty-second plenary meeting on 15 October 2003, I now call on the Observer of the Holy See.

Archbishop Migliore (Holy See): On behalf of my delegation, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for the useful reports prepared under this item. My delegation also wishes to convey its appreciation to the United Nations for its commendable initiatives undertaken to reduce the impact of natural hazards on human society, through a coordination of efforts by the international community, with particular attention to developing countries. The rigors of natural phenomena cannot be prevented, but their impact can be reduced and even avoided when capacities of vulnerable countries are strengthened and enhanced. In this regard, my delegation acknowledges the importance of strengthening the coordination of the United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance, so vital if relief assistance is to transcend the emergency phase and pass into long-term development strategy.

The world has advanced to such a degree that it is often possible to foresee natural disasters, thereby helping reduce harm to people and damage to property. Strengthened by transparent and accountable systems, the international community can now accomplish much in relief and long-term reconstruction. For this reason, my delegation supports the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, it welcomes the comprehensive approach of the Consolidated Appeals Process, the participation of the United Nations funds

and agencies, the preventive approach of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, the lead of the Economic and Social Council humanitarian segment and the valiant United Nations and other humanitarian personnel.

Needless to say, the scale of emergencies worldwide makes the task of offering effective and prompt assistance seem overwhelming. Our initiatives, projects and efforts may never be enough. Emergencies are so numerous, intense and varied that the Secretary-General has quite fittingly noted that because of the severity and suddenness of these overwhelming emergencies, others are reduced to forgotten or "silent" ones. This situation worsens when assistance is coloured by partiality and incoherent policies, not to mention when crises are ignored or even put aside because of misrule and misguided politics.

The vastness of the problem and the countless numbers of children and individuals in urgent need of help should not paralyse us in inaction. The sad fact that the contributions from donor countries and agencies are often insufficient to meet many worldwide needs should not lead us to hopelessness. Rather, these contributions should be praised and encouraged. Simple gestures of giving, oftentimes combined with rapidity of response and coordination, will make a difference and bear fruit.

My delegation is pleased to mention that the Holy See has taken an active role in this regard. More than 30 years ago, it established the Pontifical Council Cor Unum to harmonize and encourage the activities of church organizations, associations, non-governmental organizations and other groups involved in the field of social and charitable assistance to people in countries hit by natural disasters and wars. In particular, the Pontifical Council has been engaged in intensifying its humanitarian action for victims of almost all types of natural disasters, especially in developing countries. Moreover, within its means, it has contributed in concrete ways to assisting people in moments of disaster.

Besides the Pontifical Council, the Catholic Church in particular countries has organized its relief efforts through agencies such as Caritas Internationalis and Catholic Relief Services. These organizations generously commit themselves to humanitarian work in the area of natural disaster reduction and rehabilitation. The commitment of Church organizations and

associations has become increasingly essential and important in contributing to the development and reconstruction of various societies.

In general, there is a clear and determined awareness that it is possible to prevent and reduce the impact of natural disasters. However, numerous disasters continue to strike peoples in different parts of the world, while chronic emergencies resulting from armed conflicts, extreme poverty and ethnic clashes have given rise to an enormous displacement of peoples throughout the world.

The international community should not let these victims of tragic events and conflicts succumb to the agony they have been enduring in the aftermath of such natural and manmade disasters. It is necessary to have the will, converted into concerted action, to intensify assistance for peoples still struggling in the battle for existence and survival. For this assistance to be effective, it must have the support of the entire family of nations.

My delegation therefore wishes to encourage the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and other humanitarian agencies to continue their laudable efforts in responding promptly and effectively to the plight of all victims of disasters and emergencies throughout the world.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on agenda item 40 and sub-items (a) to (e).

One representative and one observer have requested to exercise the right of reply. May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to ten minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention, and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Margarian (Armenia): I would like to respond to the statement made by the Azerbaijani delegation, in which several references to my country were made.

The use of the problem of refugees as a propaganda tool is best illustrated by the fact that Azerbaijan continues to speak about 1 million refugees during the current session of the General Assembly. In that regard, may I draw the Assembly's attention to the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees contained in document A/57/12. It is clearly indicated, on page 41 of the

English version of that report, that the total number of the Azeri population of concern to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is 587,310. It is apparently not so easy to give up such an impressive number as 1 million, but it is time for the delegation of Azerbaijan to realize that it cannot mislead the international community endlessly with false, propagandistic numbers.

One can only wonder how it is possible that a country so rich in oil and with foreign investment totalling in the billions of dollars has for so many years not been able to resolve the social and humanitarian problems of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDP) or at least to ease the poor conditions in which those people live. It is apparent that the Government of Azerbaijan is indeed not interested in resolving the issue of refugees. Had that been the case, a solution would have been found long ago. It is at least hypocritical that the Government of Azerbaijan has chosen to exploit the suffering of its own people as a propaganda tool, making a show of keeping those people in tent camps near Baku for years and making them the tragic subjects of its propagandistic campaign.

We are dealing here with just another manifestation of unsophisticated warfare against Armenia and its population. Unfortunately, Armenia was the first country in Eastern Europe to face an inflow of refugees after the pogroms and massacres against the Armenian population in Azerbaijan that took place from 1988 to 1990 and forced a community of half a million Armenians to flee that country, leaving behind their houses, apartments and properties. Those people were sheltered in Armenia, which was itself severely devastated by the earthquake of 1988 that affected one third of the country and left half a million people homeless and internally displaced. Meanwhile, in the same period of time, the authorities of Armenia provided the Azeri population of Armenia with all the necessary conditions to receive compensation for the property they left in Armenia, withdraw their deposits from banks and leave for Azerbaijan in safety and security.

Regardless of the numbers and nationalities of refugees and IDPs, the fact of their existence alone should be a matter of great concern for all of us. That is the reason that my Government, instead of speculating about the tragic destiny of that people, developed and is successfully implementing a comprehensive

rehabilitation programme for refugees and IDPs. We are doing our best to integrate them into our society.

I would like to take this opportunity to note that Armenia, whose border areas have also suffered owing to the conflict in the region, has somehow remained excluded from the rehabilitation programmes carried out by United Nations agencies, despite the fact that similar programmes have been under way for several years in the neighbouring country.

We hope that, after concluding its presidential elections, Azerbaijan will put an end to its unchanged rhetoric and try instead to engage in constructive dialogue to find a peaceful solution to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Mrs. Barghouti (Palestine) (*spoke in Arabic*): The least we can say about the statement made by the representative of Israel with regard to this item during this morning's meeting is that it was full of mistakes and distortions of fact and replete with flagrant lies. Because of the limited time allotted, we shall not go into detail concerning that statement.

However, according to the claims of the representative of Israel, the cause of the Palestinian crisis is terrorism and corruption on the part of Palestinians. The fact is that the main cause for the deterioration of the situation in occupied Palestine, the suffering of the Palestinian people and the strangling economic crisis afflicting our people is the continuation of the ugly occupation of our land and Israel's, the occupying Power, escalation of its bloody expansionist racist campaign against our people, institutions and elected leaders.

I would merely like to indicate that the occupying Power yesterday arbitrarily bombed the Gaza Strip, leading to the killing of 11 Palestinian civilians, including two children, and the wounding of scores of Palestinians and the destruction of many houses. That criminal act is yet another in a series of war crimes by Israel's occupying forces, crimes akin to crimes against humanity. That criminal act has even led to objections by some Israeli Government officials because of its horrendous nature. Israel covers up such crimes by saying that they are simply security measures. Now they are saying that they are steps taken against terrorism.

In that regard, my delegation would like to reaffirm what we stated yesterday during the resumed

tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly. The Palestinian leadership has a crystal clear position of principle in that respect. Let it be clear that it is Israel's policies and actions that have led to suicide bombings, and not the other way around. That deplored phenomenon has emerged 27 years after the occupation and after our people have lost hope in a better future. Israel is responsible for ruining the lives of three generations of Palestinians, as well as for tearing the fabric of our society and for the morbid phenomena that have afflicted our society, including suicide bombings. Israel must understand that there will be no security solution to that phenomenon under any circumstances. While all parties must act to end the phenomenon, we should not allow Israel, the occupying Power, to exploit the war against international terrorism or its civilian victims in order to provide cover for its illegal policies and practices of continued occupation, settler colonialism, expansionism and rejection of peace.

With regard to Israel's assertions of corruption, I would simply like to say that financial matters are purely internal Palestinian matters. Before talking about corruption, Israel should return to Palestinians the money it took from them. That money belongs to the Palestinian Authority, not to Israel. Palestine's Minister for Finance is commended by the international community for his integrity and honour. We cannot allow Israel, which is the source of corruption and a fundamental reason for Palestine's economic deterioration, to make allegations about corruption.

The President: May I again remind members that statements in exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by representatives from their seats.

Mr. Israfilov (Azerbaijan): It had not been our intention to take the floor, but the groundless claims made by the Armenian representative have forced us to exercise our right of reply.

We regret — although we had somewhat expected — the inadequate reaction of Armenia to our statement on the agenda item under discussion. Another attempt on the part of Armenia to dissociate itself from its immoral and vicious deeds has failed. The Armenian representative has failed once again to make even one substantiated argument in his remarks, which comes as no surprise, at least to us.

We have no intention of engaging in a useless, irrelevant and counterproductive exchange with the Armenian representative, but we would nevertheless like to draw the attention of delegations to the following facts, with respect to whose substance the representative of Armenia could hardly accuse Azerbaijan of engaging in speculation.

Armenia is an aggressor State. It has violated the United Nations Charter and continues to undermine the fundamental norms and principles of international law, which constitute the basis of the whole system of international relations.

Armenia has violated the territorial integrity and sovereignty of another State Member of the United Nations, the Republic of Azerbaijan, and continues to occupy almost one-fifth of the territory of that State.

Armenia continues blatantly to ignore the will of the international community and that of the Security Council, which, in its resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), demanded the unconditional, immediate and complete withdrawal of Armenian occupying forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Ten years have passed since then, and the aggressor, enjoying an environment of impunity, continues with that unlawful and ugly practice and continues to occupy Nagorny Karabakh and several other regions of Azerbaijan.

Armenia continues its almost-10-year blockade of Azerbaijan's Autonomous Republic of Nakhchivan, thereby causing enormous suffering to the civilian population of that part of Azerbaijan. It is also misleading the world with its mythical claims regarding the blockade.

Armenia is responsible, and should be brought to justice, for the ethnic cleansing it has committed in all the Azerbaijani-populated areas within its territory, accompanied by indiscriminate pogroms and the killing of hundreds of innocent women and children.

Armenia, as a result of its criminal policy, has orchestrated and carried out the eviction of almost 1 million Azerbaijanis from Armenia and from the occupied Azerbaijani territories inside and outside of the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan.

It is my intention once again to draw the attention of the United Nations and the international community to the dire fate of the innocent civilian population

affected, which was the subject of Azerbaijan's intervention today.

Armenia has erased all traces of any Azerbaijani presence in the occupied territories and continues its practice of destruction and desecration of cultural and religious monuments in those territories. It continues also with the illegal resettlement of citizens of Armenia and other States on the occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Armenia, having committed all those crimes, continues to find it appropriate to justify its repugnant policies and to mislead the Assembly. The only way Armenia can be saved from ostracism is for it to get back on the track of normal civilized behaviour; to respect — at last — international law, including the United Nations Charter; and to start to behave as a responsible member of the family of nations.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): I asked to take the floor in exercise of the right of reply in order to set the record straight with regard to the current counter-terrorist operations being carried out by Israel in Gaza in exercise of the basic right of all States to self-defence.

Since the beginning of this month, over two dozen Kassam artillery rockets have been fired by Palestinian terrorists at cities in sovereign Israeli territory — 10 such rockets in the past 48 hours. Since the Palestinian Authority is doing nothing to curtail these flagrant acts of terrorism in its own midst, Israel was forced to take action to stop those attacks.

Israel's response was measured, focused on legitimate terrorist targets and carried out in such a way as to minimize as much as possible any harm to the civilian population, which the Palestinian terrorists have exploited as shields for their extensive terrorist infrastructure. Israel struck with precision munitions against the following legitimate terrorist targets.

Its first target was a clandestine Hamas arms factory in Sajaiyeh, in which explosive charges and arms were manufactured. That target had to be attacked twice due to the number of weapons found in the factory.

Its second target was a warehouse on the outskirts of Gaza in which weapons and explosives belonging to Hamas were stockpiled. The secondary explosions following the attack indicated that the warehouse was filled with ammunition.

Its third target was a pick-up truck transporting two terrorists — Khaled al-Masri and Iyad al-Hilu of Hamas, who were responsible for the infrastructure manufacturing the Kassam rockets, along with mortar shells and explosives used in terrorist attacks.

Finally, it targeted a vehicle travelling near Nuseirat carrying a terrorist cell that was fleeing from an intercepted attempt to infiltrate Israel near Kibbutz Nahal Oz and to carry out a spectacular terrorist attack. The strikes against those targets were carried out, as I stated previously, with precision munitions. Military surveillance footage just released shows that no civilians were visible in the target area at the time of those operations. The footage shows that at least eight terrorists were killed in those pinpoint operations, while no civilian casualties were apparent.

The aim of those operations was simple: to impair Hamas' capability to carry out acts of terrorism. Let there be no doubt: Israel deeply regrets the inadvertent loss of innocent life during its counter-terrorist efforts. However, as long as the terrorists choose purposely to position themselves and their infrastructure in the midst of the civilian population, shielding themselves behind civilians, and as long as the Palestinian leadership does nothing to prevent the terrorists from doing so, it must bear sole responsibility for these unfortunate civilian casualties.

I would remind the Assembly that all of these terrorist targets are located in the Gaza Strip, an area in which the Palestinian Authority has full security control. There is no excuse for the Palestinian Authority's complacency regarding and complicity with these terrorists. These terror groups should have been dismantled long ago by the Palestinian Authority in accordance with international law and with the commitments that the Palestinian leadership repeatedly took upon itself, from the Declaration of Principles in 1993 to this year's road map.

Having no alternative, Israel must do what the Palestinian Authority is obligated, but refuses, to do: fight Palestinian terrorism. Israel must protect the lives of its citizens.

Mr. Margarian (Armenia): I ask for your indulgence, Mr. President, in taking the floor a second time.

The representative of Azerbaijan made many absurd allegations, but I will limit my second response

to two major issues. First, his reference to so-called aggression by the Republic of Armenia against his country was, again, totally misleading. We have repeatedly stated — and this is well known — that the situation to which he referred was a forced reaction to Azerbaijan's own decision to use military force to suppress the legitimate and just quest of the people of Nagorny Karabakh to peacefully exercise their right to self-determination, which is guaranteed by international law and the United Nations Charter.

Azerbaijan's claims of territorial integrity are also historically, legally and politically deficient, since Nagorny Karabakh has never been a part of Azerbaijan, except during the era of the Soviet Union, when it was within its administrative borders. Consequently, during the break-up of the Soviet Union the people of Nagorny Karabakh exercised their right of self-determination, peacefully and in accordance with Soviet and international law. Those facts are well-known and have been documented, so I would suggest that my Azerbaijani colleague once again review his facts. The people of Nagorny Karabakh have the legitimate credentials to pursue a just solution to the conflict. Armenia is determined in its endeavours to take every measure to ensure a peaceful negotiated outcome, which would ensure the right of the Karabakh people to live freely and securely in their homeland.

Mr. Israfilov (Azerbaijan): I would like briefly to summarize my earlier intervention. First, Armenia is to blame for the emergency humanitarian situation in Azerbaijan. It is because of Armenia's aggression and policy of ethnic cleansing that hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians were brutally evicted from their homes. Secondly, Armenia has grossly violated the Charter and international law. It has violated the sovereignty and territorial integrity of a sovereign Member State, Azerbaijan, and should therefore be brought to justice. The international community should put an end to impunity for the aggressor, as well as to the policy of double standards and a selective approach.

I could, of course, go on with this list, but I believe that those comments are sufficient for now. My advice to Armenia would be that, instead of giving cynical advice and counting the money and oil resources of others, instead of wasting the time and resources of this body in exercise of the right of reply, it would be better off practising common sense and decency and respecting the norms and principles of

international law and the rules of this house, and get out of the occupied Azerbaijani territories.

Mrs. Barghouti (Palestine): It is highly regrettable that, regardless of the issue under discussion in the Assembly — in this case humanitarian assistance — the Israeli representative is able to present us only with a standard-issue statement. He delivers it "anywhere, any time", always on terrorism, which is highly questionable and very insulting to the General Assembly.

Moreover, we regret that the Israeli representative forgot to mention that nearly 100 Palestinian civilians, including children, were wounded in the Israeli attacks against Gaza yesterday, which killed 12 civilians, including a doctor who rushed to assist the victims. Those are the facts.

Mr. Shacham (Israel): In my first reply I addressed the issues raised in the Palestinian Observer's reply. However, since the Palestinian Observer has, in replying, provided me with the opportunity to address the Assembly for five more minutes, I would like to refer to the issue of suicide bombers, which the Palestinian Observer brought up in her first reply.

The morally abhorrent and patently false claim that suicide terrorism is caused by Israel must be rejected out of hand. Less than 2 weeks ago, 21 Israelis were killed by a female Palestinian suicide terrorist. Hanadi Jaradat, a 29-year-old lawyer from Jenin, who carried out the attack, was the sixth such female suicide bomber in the past two years. Several other female bombers have been apprehended when about to blow themselves up, including one who was hiding a bomb under a maternity dress and another who was only 15 years old.

While the media has expressed surprise at Palestinian women acting as suicide bombers, it should surprise no one who has followed developments in the Palestinian Authority. Yasser Arafat's Palestinian Authority — not Israel — has regularly targeted women in its promotion and glorification of suicide terrorism. Immediately after the first bombing by a woman — Wafa Idris — on 27 January 2002, the Palestinian Authority undertook a very public campaign to indoctrinate Palestinian women to see themselves as potential suicide bombers. After the bombing, the Palestinian Authority immediately depicted her as a heroine and her murders as acts to be

emulated. Within days, the Palestinian Authority held a demonstration in her honour, with young girls carrying posters with Idris' pictures and the words, "The Fatah movement" — that is, Arafat's movement — "eulogizes with great pride the heroic martyr Wafa Idris".

The Palestinian Authority, seeing that women could more easily get past Israeli security, immediately created an operational framework for terrorist activity by women. The Palestinian Authority named this new brigade in honour of Wafa Idris. All of that promotion led to a string of unsuccessful suicide bombing attempts by women and, eventually, to a bombing in a Jerusalem supermarket on 29 March 2002 by Ayat al-Akhras, a 17-year-old girl, who killed two Israeli civilians and injured about two dozen others. The Palestinian Authority — not Israel — then turned those two successful killers into symbols for Palestinian girls. Palestinian Authority girls' summer camps, for example, were named after Idris and Akhras, both last year and this year.

Sadly, this campaign to turn female suicide bombers into role models is succeeding. In an interview on Palestinian Authority television after the first two suicide bombings by women, young Palestinian girls discussed their feelings about suicide terrorism. Typical of the statements was one made by a girl name Sabrine, who stated, "Of course I support blowing up. It is our right. Maybe no one will sympathize with us when they hear that children blow themselves up, but that is called heroism".

Women whose social standing is problematic, including women who have acquired a so-called bad reputation due to assumed promiscuity or extra-marital relationships, have often been convinced to take part in suicide operations as a means of rehabilitating their names. The strength of this type of persuasion can best be understood in the relevant cultural framework: a society in which women are often considered to embody the honour of the family. Any hint of impropriety, no matter how minor, can have serious consequences for the women involved, even prompting male family members to murder her in so-called honour killings.

So, in steps Yasser Arafat and his Fatah Tanzim terrorist group. They recently embarked on a campaign to recruit as suicide terrorists those young women who find themselves in acute emotional distress due to such

social stigmatization. This method of coercion is characterized by the seduction of young women into illicit relationships or, failing that, the arrangement of their rape. Subsequently, overwhelming emotional pressure is brought to bear on the women in order to convince them to end their lives in an admirable manner, since public revelation of their impropriety will constitute an intolerable disgrace to the honour of their families.

The President: The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 40, sub-items (a) to (e). I would like to remind Members that sub-item (f), entitled "Emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy and reconstruction of war-stricken Afghanistan", will be considered together with agenda item 28, "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security", on Friday, 5 December 2003.

Agenda item 41

Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children

The report of the Secretary-General (A/58/333)

Mr. Balarezo (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to address the General Assembly on behalf of the countries of the Rio Group: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela and my country, Peru.

The important role of the Rio Group during the process that concluded with the special session of the General Assembly on children in May 2002 was the result of commitments assumed by our countries long before the beginning of the special session, with the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. That Convention constitutes the basis of our work in favour of our children and adolescents, with a focus on human rights. The task of our Governments benefited from the valuable participation of representatives of civil society, in particular non-governmental organizations and other actors involved in promoting and protecting the rights of children and adolescents. That has enabled us to take action aimed at achieving sustainable human development, focused on the best interests of the child and grounded in the

principles of democracy, equality and non-discrimination, among other things.

At the international level, the special session on children, among other factors, has strengthened our capacities and has motivated our nations to continue to develop processes and to implement action for change to benefit children and adolescents, based on a shared regional vision.

The special session enabled the international community to renew its political commitment to children and adolescents. It also established a group of priorities through the adoption of the Plan of Action, which contained commitments for the twenty-first century. Through that document, the product of the special session, we established four priorities: to promote healthy lives, to provide quality education to all children, to protect children from abuse, exploitation and violence, and to combat HIV/AIDS.

Achieving those goals, as well as the commitments undertaken in 1990 and the initiatives of the Millennium Declaration, Agenda 21, the Monterrey Conference and the Johannesburg Summit, requires coordinated action by all involved national and international actors.

At the regional level, the Rio Group believes that the well-being of children and adolescents should be considered a main objective of the development process. That was declared at the seventeenth Summit of the Rio Group, held in Cusco, Peru in May 2002. The outcome of that Summit was the Cusco Consensus, in which we established a strategic agenda for action, giving high priority to the effective reduction of poverty and the fight against malnutrition and hunger; that work that must begin with children. In that regard, the Rio Group renewed its commitment to promoting the fulfilment of the goals agreed at the special session of the General Assembly in 2002. The Rio Group has the political will at the highest level of member Governments to promote and protect the rights of children and adolescents, taking into consideration their specific needs according to their age, including the right to sexual and reproductive health and the responsibilities of both male and female adolescents.

In that regard, the countries of the Rio Group have made great efforts to achieve one of the goals set out in the document entitled "A world fit for children", referring to the development and strengthening of national and regional plans. It should be pointed out

that many of our countries have now prepared national plans based on social investment in children and adolescents. Some of those plans are now at the implementation stage, and we recognize the valuable support of UNICEF in this undertaking.

In that connection, it should be underlined that such social investment is often seriously hindered by the difficult economic situation prevailing in our region. This has had a negative impact on various social groups, in particular on vulnerable social groups such as children and adolescents, affecting the provision of services such as health and education. This situation has hindered the fulfilment of our objectives, such as the goal of using a minimum of 20 per cent of national budget resources for basic social services. Nevertheless, most of our countries have been able to reduce the infant mortality rate and the mortality rate of children under 5 years of age to eradicate some preventable diseases, to increase primary school enrolment and graduation rates and to reduce illiteracy.

The countries of the Rio Group are proud to have multicultural and multi-ethnic populations. For that reason, we attach special importance to investing in children and adolescents, in particular in areas of marginalized or minority populations, such as indigenous populations and those of African descent. In that regard, we are coordinating action to combat discrimination and high rates of poverty and social exclusion. At the same time, we reaffirm the need to implement public policies that include ethnicity and other dimensions such as gender, age and poverty.

I cannot conclude without referring to the difficult situation of children in armed conflict. As the Secretary-General states in his report (A/58/333), the fight to ensure the protection of the rights and well-being of the children exposed to armed conflicts has reached a decisive moment. Several normative instruments and commitments exist; but it is now necessary to take coordinated steps to fully implement them, with a view to establishing an effective regime of protection for children affected by war. In that regard, we support the Secretary-General's initiative to establish an integrated surveillance and information network to provide objective, periodic and accurate reports of violations against children.

In conclusion, I would like to renew the commitment of our Governments to continue to work

on behalf of children and adolescents, as they are the most important human and social asset for which we have a present and future responsibility.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries of Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the associated countries of Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, and the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area, Norway, have aligned themselves with this statement.

At the General Assembly's special session on children, the international community committed itself to a set of specific goals for children and young people. Its outcome document is our undertaking to work together in order to build a world fit for children. A little more than one year later, it is time for us to reflect on our actions and to assess their impact to ensure that the Plan of Action does not remain mere words.

Creating a world fit for children is about creating an enabling environment that impacts the everyday lives of children and their families. That must be reflected in all strategies at the international, regional, national and local levels. The Plan of Action adopted at the special session on children focused on four priority action areas: promoting healthy lives, providing quality education, protecting children from abuse and violence and combating HIV/AIDS. Those goals are fully consistent with the Millennium Development Goals, the achievement of which is of central importance to children. The Goals are ambitious, but attainable.

At the international level we can benefit from the clear standard provided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols. Another important aspect in implementing, at the international and regional levels, the goals set forth in the Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children", is to integrate a rights-based approach into the work of regional and global organizations such as UNICEF and other relevant bodies of the United Nations system. The European Union welcomes the fact that that approach is now firmly entrenched in their mandates and programmes, and considers it particularly important that they continue to follow that path. Further efforts to fully mainstream the rights-based approach are also needed in the concrete implementation of programmes at the national level.

The adoption and carrying out of national plans of action for children is a crucial step towards putting in place mechanisms for meaningful implementation, monitoring and review. Most important, it is the only follow-up action defined in "A world fit for children" to be completed by the end of 2003. For the European Union, this element is high on national agendas and is a part of policy- and decision-making in all areas. Mechanisms to monitor compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child have already been put in place. In fact, ombudsmen for children or other similar institutions exist in a great number of European countries. The European Union reaffirms its commitment to give high priority to that objective, and encourages all States to do the same by translating international goals into specific time-bound and measurable national targets based on local needs and situations.

In all those follow-up processes it is fundamental to actively involve, and work in cooperation with, civil society actors, including non-governmental organizations and children and their families. Children and adolescents are resourceful citizens capable of building a better future for all. We must respect their right to express themselves and to participate in all matters affecting them. In particular, we believe that further action is needed at the national level to take children's views and interests into account.

The European Union underscores the importance it attaches to ensuring that children live healthy lives. We note general comment 4 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, regarding adolescent health and development. We also reiterate that sexual and reproductive health care and education are elements in the fight against poverty, and hence in reaching the goals and targets set by "A world fit for children". We therefore encourage all Governments to follow up their commitments to effectively address, for all persons of appropriate age, the promotion of their reproductive and sexual health. The goal of healthy lives for all children also encompasses such other aspects as child mortality, disease, malnutrition, healthy environments and mental health. In that respect, all States should ensure that all children have access to sustainable health systems and social services, as well as to adequate education, information and counselling that guarantees them the opportunity to participate in decisions affecting their health.

In "A world fit for children", all States agreed to ensure that all children have access to complete primary education that is free, compulsory and of good quality. The same opportunity should be made equally available to all children exposed to difficult situations. On several occasions, the European Union has stressed the crucial role that education must play in developing more extensive and far-reaching actions concerning children. We therefore urge all States to take all necessary measures to eliminate obstacles to the full realization of the right to education, with particular emphasis on the education of girls. Indeed, educating girls is a key factor to reducing poverty, hunger, under-age-5 mortality and maternal mortality, as well as in fighting major diseases. If the goals of the special session's Plan of Action are to be met, the international community must rapidly move towards the goal of universal primary education by ensuring every girl her right to education.

Millions of children are still suffering from war, violence, exploitation, neglect and all forms of abuse and discrimination. Violence against children can take many forms, such as trafficking, child labour, sexual exploitation and abduction, physical and psychological violence and torture. It can occur everywhere, and it is difficult to tackle because it is often hidden. Girls, children belonging to minorities, indigenous children and children with disabilities are more likely than others to suffer from multiple kinds of discrimination. We urge all States to adopt a zero-tolerance approach, to take all necessary measures to combat such practices and to ensure the investigation, prosecution and punishment of perpetrators while safeguarding the rights and interests of child victims at all stages of proceedings.

The urgent need to adopt policies and programmes to respond to the needs of millions of children orphaned, or directly and indirectly affected by HIV/AIDS, has not yet been effectively addressed. In that respect, girls are in a particularly difficult situation, as they often face economic, legal and social constraints that impede effective risk-reduction. Efforts must therefore be intensified. Girls need to be empowered, while boys need to be more involved.

The European Union reaffirms its commitment to combating HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria with a view to their eradication. It welcomes the rapid start-up of the activities of the Global Fund to Fight HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and affirms its determination

to enable this multilateral instrument to bring high-quality affordable prevention, care and treatment to the most needy, in particular children in the developing countries. Prevention must include efforts to increase access to contraceptives and sexual health information.

The real implementation of plans for a world fit for children has just begun. The Secretary-General's report highlights positive steps already taken by many countries in all regions of the world. The progress achieved so far is a good start, but much more remains to be done. All relevant actors — Governments, civil society, non-governmental organizations, children and their families and the international community as a whole — need to move ahead, from plans and policies to actions and results.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): The Secretary-General's report contained in document A/58/333 provides a useful basis for our discussion on the progress made in the implementation of the commitments we made to our children last year at the General Assembly's special session on children. We thank the Secretary-General for the report and concur with the recommendations contained therein. Furthermore, we commend the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for its tireless efforts and continued commitment to promote the rights and welfare of our children.

This year is particularly significant because of the first time-bound goals and targets based on the plan of action entitled "A world fit for children" (*resolution S-27/2*). In this respect, I would like to express our appreciation for the timely and appropriate discussion focused on the progress made and problems encountered in realizing the commitments made at the special session on children.

Not only did the special session on children provide us the occasion to review the progress made since 1990, it also availed us of the opportunity to further commit ourselves to make this world a better place for our children. On our part, the rights of the child are enshrined in our constitution as the guiding principle when it comes to issues pertaining to children.

Following the special session on children, there has been a considerable amount of awareness-raising in Namibia. For example, as a follow-up to the campaign for the "Say Yes for children" pledge, 28 September was declared as the Day of the Namibian Child. The

Day of the African Child, commemorated on 16 June, continues to serve as an important platform for children to raise issues pertaining to their advancement and development. Furthermore, the Government, in conjunction with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), is conducting a series of nation-wide workshops on the sexual and reproductive health of adolescents.

We attach great importance to the health and education of our children. The education and health sector accounts for around forty per cent of our annual national budget. Primary health care is free, while curative health care is heavily subsidized by the Government. In addition, the treatment programme to prevent mother-to-child transmission has been piloted in two main hospitals in the country, and plans are under way to expand it to other hospitals.

In the area of education, the early childhood development policy is under review to include HIV/AIDS components.

Primary education is free and compulsory in Namibia, in accordance with the national constitution. Each year the Government, under the auspices of the Namibia Institute For Education Development, reviews and amends the syllabus for all grades in order to ensure quality education for children. The challenge for us is to provide a universal sustainable quality education.

Regarding the promotion and protection of the well-being of children, Parliament recently passed the Combating of Domestic Violence Act. The Act does not define violence solely as physical assaults, but includes economic, emotional, psychological and physiological violence. Furthermore, the Government is in the process of drafting two acts of legislation for the protection of children, namely, the Children's Status Bill and the Child Care and Protection Bill. In this field, there are 15 Women and Child Protection Units across the country. They are there to protect battered women and children and are administered by the Namibian police.

Although much progress has been made, the impact of these achievements remain uneven. Major challenges continue to face our Government in implementing the plan of action that was adopted at the special session on children.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic continues to reverse our hard-earned social and economic gains. It is one of the major public health problems in Namibia. HIV/AIDS is also resulting in an increased number of households headed by children. In redressing this situation, the Namibian Government is directing more attention towards improved support for child-headed households, through identifying foster parents and providing financial assistance to them and ensuring that all orphans and other vulnerable children are registered without any impediments. Orphans in Namibia also receive free education. The Government is currently finalizing the Orphans and Other Vulnerable Children Trust Fund, which will cover all essential needs for these children.

Furthermore, poverty remains not only a major obstacle in realizing many of the commitments we made to our children but also a cause of many other social evils such as an increase in violence against and abuse of children. In this respect, girls, more than boys, are increasingly becoming victims.

Another obstacle in realizing the commitments we made to our children is food insecurity. Namibia is a drought-prone country, and therefore many of our children, especially in the remote areas, suffer from hunger and related illnesses. As a result, the Government coordinates relief programmes, which include, among others, feeding schemes for school children in some schools. The Government assumes the central role in reaching the most vulnerable citizens when executing its activities.

Finally, the Namibian Government remains fully committed to the implementation of the Plan of Action. We are convinced that the effective implementation of the Plan of Action requires concerted efforts on all levels. Thus, we call on the donor countries to honour their commitment to providing additional resources.

Mr. Staehelin (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland has always considered the special session of the General Assembly devoted to children to be an important opportunity for the international community to reaffirm in one voice its commitment to children. Furthermore, we participated actively in the negotiations that made possible the adoption of the outcome document, "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex).

"A world fit for children" contains an ambitious Plan of Action. While identifying priorities, it

considers in a detailed and comprehensive way the many challenges that must be faced daily by children in the world, particularly in the areas of education, health, economic and sexual exploitation and armed conflict. The principles of non-discrimination; the best interests of children; the right to life, to survival and to development; and respect for children's opinions underlie the entire Plan of Action. Undoubtedly, some of the commitments reached during the negotiations fall short of international standards in this area, particularly in the fields of access to reproductive care, juvenile justice and child labour. That said, each State remains bound by its international obligations, and their implementation complements that of the Plan of Action.

There are many measures that will enable us to fulfil the objectives and strategies defined during the special session — ratifying international instruments that protect children and integrate them into the domestic legal system; intensifying international cooperation to fight transboundary crime, such as the trafficking in children and child pornography on the Internet; and awareness-raising campaigns, to cite only a few. Moreover, identifying national priorities — including at the sectoral level — is necessary, given that persistent challenges are not always the same in all regions of the world.

In that connection, we thank the Secretary-General for his report on follow-up to the United Nations special session on children (A/58/333), which my country read with great interest. We share the opinions expressed by the Secretary-General in his report and, like him, consider that much remains to be done in this area, including in our own country. In order to bring that about — and without diminishing the primary responsibility of States — constructive cooperation with international organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, civil society as a whole and, above all, children themselves is necessary.

Switzerland hereby informs the Assembly that it will shortly hold informal consultations on a procedural draft resolution on follow-up to the special session. The draft resolution — which will be a text of the General Assembly presidency — will be elaborated in close cooperation with the member countries of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund. We consider it particularly important to plan the convening of a high-level plenary meeting in 2006,

when "A world fit for children" requests the Secretary-General to submit an initial detailed report on progress achieved. We welcome in advance the valuable cooperation of all States in that regard.

Ms. Tariq (Pakistan): Mr. President, we are immensely pleased to see you preside over this important meeting.

Today, millions of children are suffering as a result of infant mortality, child trafficking — often leading to prostitution — and exploitive child labour. Those deprived, neglected, exploited and abused children continue to call the collective conscience of humanity to action. Their plight is a grim reminder of failure of the international community. However, the worst exploitation of children — both as victims and as child soldiers — is witnessed in situations of armed conflict. Despite growing awareness and increased focus on children's protection and rehabilitation, their sufferings have not ended. For efforts to succeed, we must address the root causes. We believe that the just, peaceful and amicable resolution of long-standing conflicts in the Middle East, South Asia, Africa, Central Asia and elsewhere is essential.

The twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly, on children, was convened last year to take stock of the abysmal and disheartening situation of the children in the world. Its outcome, the annex to resolution S-27/2, "A world fit for children", was a forward-looking, focused and results-oriented document that painstakingly carved out our shared agenda — one that can be fulfilled only through sustained and collective efforts. Such efforts require international assistance for developing countries through debt relief measures, increased development assistance, enhanced investment, the removal of trade barriers and measures to bridge the digital divide.

Pakistan took an active part in the special session. "A world fit for children" provided us with a great challenge that Pakistan, its people and governments have accepted. Immediately after the special session, Pakistan organized a national conference on children. All stakeholders, including the Government, civil society, international organizations, children and media from all over Pakistan, participated. Their views and recommendations are being incorporated into the national plan of action for children.

For Pakistan, another follow-up to the special session was the establishment of a national child

commission with an equal partnership among the federal and provincial governments, the corporate sector, civil society, media representatives and, most important of all, children themselves. Four important subcommittees have been set up, and that structure will be replicated in the provinces.

The Government is working on good governance, participatory democracy and economic revival. Pakistan is also putting in place a comprehensive reform programme that protects the vulnerable, including children, and is a fundamental element of Pakistan's human security agenda. Accordingly, the national perspective plan for 2002 to 2012 concentrates on education, infant mortality, child labour and the review of legislation in line with our international obligations.

Following are a number of Pakistan's relevant initiatives and achievements.

First, free secondary education — especially for girls — has been provided. School enrolment is set to reach 100 per cent by 2010, while the female literacy rate is set to increase from 39 per cent presently to 67 per cent by 2011.

Secondly, juvenile courts have been set up, and capital punishment for juveniles has been abolished. The policy of granting amnesty in minor cases has been continued. Prosecution has also been withdrawn in cases where trials have been delayed due to no fault of the juvenile accused. Special arrangements for the education of juveniles in prison have been made.

Thirdly, greater access to proper nutrition and health facilities is being ensured. Focus remains on immunization campaigns, provision of iodized salt and improvements with respect to low birth weight. National immunization campaigns now cover over 90 per cent of infants and children. Polio has almost been eradicated. Infant mortality has been brought down to under 95 per 1,000.

Access to safe water is now available to more than 93 per cent of urban and 78 per cent of the rural population.

To improve the nutritional status of girl children in primary schools, the Tawana Pakistan project has been launched, which seeks to provide meals, micronutrients and medicine to girls in primary schools.

To eliminate child labour by 2005, a national policy and plan of action have been approved. A fund has been established for the education of working children with an initial outlay of 100 million rupees — around \$1.8 million. Special free classes in the morning and evening have been arranged for working children, and stipends are being paid to their families as compensation and incentive.

We are well aware that the future will judge nations by the well-being of their children. It is our conviction that depriving children — whether of freedom, growth or education — in truth deprives nations of their sense of morality. It is in this spirit that we join the global voice for a qualitative change in the lives of our children. Our child-action road map acknowledges the principle of the best interests of the child, which is reflected in our laws, policies, programmes and resource allocation. Despite difficulties, we are determined to make our country and, in turn, the world fit for children.

Ms. Omar (Malaysia): I wish to begin by recording our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (A/58/333) outlining the progress, as well as the constraints, in meeting the goals of the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the special session of the General Assembly on children held in May 2002.

My delegation is pleased that the Secretary-General has reported that good progress has been made in terms of the commitment of Governments to incorporate the goals of the Plan of Action into their national policies, plans and programmes. However, we note with a certain amount of sadness that there has been little change in the major statistical indicators for the four goals envisaged by the Plan of Action. Eleven million children under the age of 5 still die each year. Pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria and HIV/AIDS remain leading causes of death among children. Over 100 million children still do not have access to education; 180 million children are still engaged in the worst forms of child labour.

The results of this review, although issued only slightly more than a year since the special session, are sufficient to remind us that, unless we pay serious attention to the problems faced by developing countries in meeting their commitment, nothing much will change in the statistical indicators, even for the next 10 years. The situation affecting children in these countries in the four identified areas may even

deteriorate. We certainly have a daunting task ahead of us. We must not forget that the World Summit for Children was held in 1990. Twelve years later we found it necessary to call for a special session, as the situation affecting children remained a cause for concern. It is obvious that the collective pledges and commitments made to improve the situation need to be translated into concrete action at the national, regional and international levels. For this, adequate resources, expertise and assistance need to be available to all concerned.

At the special session, the international community committed itself to taking action for the improvement and development of all children, particularly those in developing countries. Member States have collectively acknowledged the imperatives of international cooperation and a multidimensional approach to assist developing countries to implement the Plan of Action. We reminded ourselves of the pledges made at the various landmark international meetings and summits, including through documents such as the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. We therefore need to remind ourselves again of those commitments and of the actions required to realize the goals set by the special session on children.

My delegation commends the relevant United Nations development agencies for their invaluable support and commitment in gearing their activities to assist and support Member States in implementing the policies, plans and programmes proposed by the Plan of Action. We urge the relevant United Nations agencies to continue their efforts in assisting developing countries to establish and strengthen their national capacity and institutions for the promotion and protection of the rights of children. They could also explore the possibility of working in tandem with regional organizations, where appropriate, to assist Member States achieve the goals set at the special session.

Malaysia began the implementation of its Second National Plan of Action for Children prior to the special session of the General Assembly on children convened in 2002. Our Plan of Action, spanning the period from 2001 to 2020, has been formulated in conformity with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Designed as part of the national policy to ensure the promotion and the

protection of children, aimed at steering the country to achieve the status of a developed nation by the year 2020, the National Plan of Action has incorporated all four elements and goals envisaged at the special session on children.

My delegation is pleased to share with the Assembly the action undertaken by Malaysia on the four priority areas addressed at the special session on children. First, with regard providing quality education, in Malaysia education is given the highest priority in the national agenda: 20.6 per cent of the total development allocation under the Eighth Malaysia Plan is allocated for education. The national education policy is geared towards providing basic education for a minimum of nine years. There is equal access to educational opportunities for both girls and boys, with the proportion of enrolment of the two genders being almost equal — 50.4 per cent boys and 49.6 per cent girls — except at the tertiary level, where there is higher enrolment of girls than boys. Educational facilities have been put in place in all schools throughout the country for the disabled. With this development, the Government has now made primary education compulsory for all.

Secondly, with regard to promoting healthy lives, Malaysia has developed the health sector and continuously upgrades medical facilities and programmes in the country. This has led to, among other things, a steady decline in maternal and neonatal mortality, which currently stand at 0.2 and 5 per 1,000 respectively. To ensure that every child can enjoy optimal health, community clinics have been set up throughout the country. These health centres provide immunization, normal-development assessment and other related medical care for children. Malaysia has also given special attention to disabled children in line with the concept of total rehabilitation, which entails a multidisciplinary approach. The Department of Social Welfare, through institutional services, with the Ministry of Health providing technical input, provides rehabilitation services for disabled children.

Thirdly, in the context of protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence, Malaysia has enacted its Child Act 2001, formulated in line with the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The act sets out provisions for the care and protection of children. A court for children has been established. In dealing with problems of child abuse, Malaysia has developed mechanisms for child

protection, care and rehabilitation through the setting up of intersectoral Suspected Child Abuse and Neglect (SCAN) teams at district and state hospitals. A milestone in preventive measures is the establishment of child protection teams, which set out multiple programmes run by the community and for the community. Among other things, they run parental education activities and serve as counselling centres. Malaysia has also taken measures to combat the commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of children. Since effective measures to combat such crimes requires regional and international cooperation, the relevant authorities in Malaysia have developed close cooperation with their counterparts, particularly among countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Fourthly, in combating HIV/AIDS, Malaysia has given very serious attention to measures to combat HIV/AIDS, although the reported number of cases of HIV infection is low, in proportion to our population. The Government has taken a comprehensive and integrated approach in dealing with this problem; it includes preventive measures, care, support and treatment for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. The Government works closely with Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in this regard, in particular the Malaysian AIDS Council, an umbrella organization headed by Datin Paduka Marina Mahathir.

Fully recognizing that the future of a country depends to a great extent on the advancement and protection of its children, Malaysia has pledged in its Vision 2020 that every child born should be brought up in a healthy environment; provided with all necessary protection against diseases; receive proper nurturing, care and affection; receive general and higher education as far as possible; learn appropriate skills in the necessary fields; and be imbued with cultural and human values.

Malaysia is prepared to cooperate with the United Nations, in particular the United Nations Children's Fund, to offer information on the experiences we have gained in the implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action of the special session. We hope that the sharing and dissemination of information on our respective experiences will assist Member States in moving towards the goals in the four areas envisioned at the special session on children.

Mrs. Sereno (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Uruguay aligns itself with the statement made by Peru on behalf of the Rio Group.

The Declaration and Plan of Action annexed to resolution S-27/2, entitled "A world fit for children" and adopted at the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly, represent a commitment by the international community to consider boys, girls and adolescents as a priority development goal. They contain recommendations to States to help them implement the mechanisms necessary to provide children with a quality education and protect them from abuse, exploitation and violence, and to combat HIV/AIDS.

It is now time to review the progress achieved towards the first goal set forth in that document, which is the elaboration and strengthening of national and regional plans of action targeted at children, and to transform international objectives into national objectives based on local needs and situations, a goal that should be achieved by the end of this year.

For Uruguay, the Convention on the Rights of the Child is the basis and principal normative framework that guides national strategies related to children. Uruguay has also ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention, on the involvement of children in armed conflict, and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Uruguay has increased public spending for this sector of the population and has obtained good results, such as in the field of health, for example, where the rate of infant mortality has declined, and in the field of education, where universal education has been introduced from the age of four years.

However, together with progress in policies for the provision and expansion of comprehensive services for children, Uruguay is encountering a series of difficulties as a result of the prolonged economic crisis from which it has been suffering for nearly five years now, which has affected the most vulnerable sectors of society and has led to such problems as an increased incidence of poverty among children and child labour.

In order to combat these and other evils that affect our children and to promote the effective enjoyment of their rights, Uruguay has been developing a comprehensive programme for at-risk children, youth and families. This programme depends on and is

coordinated by the secretariat of the office of the President of the Republic and is thus a reflection of the Government's determination to take leadership in this field. In addition to national counterpart funding in the amount of \$4.5 million, the programme will be financed through a loan from the Inter-American Development Bank in the amount of \$40 million, repayable over 25 years with a five-year grace period.

The programme is notable for its participatory and intersectoral design, which was developed jointly by the State, civil society and various young people's groups which are potential beneficiaries. Its objective is to improve the living conditions and the social integration of boys, girls and youth who are in situations of social risk, as well as of their families. To that end, we will work to provide comprehensive care and greater access to quality services for the entire family group, giving priority to preventive action that will have a sustainable impact over the long term. The programme consists, *inter alia*, of major components that include comprehensive projects for prevention and care for children by age group, with special models for the prevention of teenage pregnancy and for the needs of street children and victims of child abuse and sexual abuse.

In that connection, I wish to draw attention to the increase in resources and the introduction of new methodologies for the Child and Family Health Centres that provide services to households with children aged up to four. For children aged 4 to 12 years, the goal is to strengthen the links between the family, school and community, by encouraging healthy lifestyles and promoting, for example, recreational activities and sports as vehicles for socialization and integration.

In the case of children aged 13 to 17 years, efforts will focus on, among other things, reintegrating them into the formal educational system in order to permit them to acquire and develop skills that will prepare them for later inclusion in the labour market.

Another important aspect of the programme relates to the teaching and widespread dissemination of the rights of the child, in which the goal is to ensure the widest possible dissemination and to promote greater awareness within society at large of the specific conditions of the population to which the programme is targeted and to publicize the contributions made by children and youth themselves to the programme. This

programme is national in scope and is expected to operate for five years.

Apart from the elaboration of this programme, Uruguay has embarked on a number of other initiatives aimed at implementing the recommendations contained in the document entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex) and at addressing the problems that affect our children and young people.

In order to combat the problems of teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, we have decided to implement a single national sex education programme as part of the school curriculum and health service, which includes the compulsory training of teachers, instructors and health professionals.

The plan also places emphasis on the importance of the family unit, on educational and health care establishments, as well as on extended social circles such as friends, sporting groups, religious organizations and other groups that can influence the teaching of children and youth.

Parliament is also considering draft legislation for the establishment of a national council on guidance and assistance for graduates of the National Youth Institute, with the aim of continuing training, care and assistance to these young people.

Another initiative is the so-called "Blue Line", a toll-free telephone line whereby children and adolescent victims of abuse or violence of any kind can look for help and counselling.

It should be noted that all of these actions on behalf of children are being undertaken with the valuable support and tireless work of civil society in Uruguay, especially the national networks of non-governmental organizations and children's organizations. The latter include, for example, "Gurises Unidos", an organization that works with street children. Their General Coordinator chaired the caucus of Latin American and Caribbean non-governmental organizations during the special session.

These and other plans and projects represent a major challenge for Uruguay. In order to achieve their full implementation, the national authorities are making strenuous efforts in the knowledge that placing children first, eradicating poverty by investing in children, not allowing any child to be left behind, and guaranteeing children the protection, care, health and

education that they deserve will enable them to develop into upright individuals and responsible citizens, capable of living in a society that is truly democratic, egalitarian, free of discrimination, with peace and social justice, and a society in which one can respect and enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*):

The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the Secretariat for the report submitted by the Secretary-General. I would like to take this opportunity to describe China's progress made as a follow-up to the United Nations special session on children. The Chinese Government promulgated in May 2001 a national programme of action for child development in China, which laid out the goals of decreasing the mortality rates of infants, children under five years of age and their mothers; reducing malnutrition in children under 5, and promoting the early development of children, increasing their access to school and raising their educational levels.

In order to reach the goals put forward by the United Nations special session on children, Governmental agencies have formulated a series of plans at all levels. The relevant Government departments and organizations have been given specific responsibilities for implementation and have reinforced their efforts by mapping out detailed plans and defining key areas and difficult issues.

The National working committee on women and children, a central Government department responsible for work with children, is made up of 24 Government departments and five non-governmental organizations. Since 2001, the working committee on women and children has further strengthened its functions with increased staff and funds in all provinces, prefectures and counties.

These committees are responsible for promoting and coordinating the implementation of the national programme of action by Government departments and non-governmental organizations, and for monitoring and evaluating its implementation process. At present, a national-level monitoring and statistical indicator system has been established, and the training of provincial monitoring and statistical personnel has begun.

China has promulgated a series of laws concerning the survival, protection and development of women and children. In addition to the Constitution,

there are, for example, laws on education, the protection of minors, maternal and childcare and adoption, as well as numerous corresponding regulations and policy measures which together form a fairly complete legal framework for the protection of the rights and interests of children.

As the largest non-governmental organization in China, the All China Women's Federation has closely followed issues relating to children such as the rights of the child, and the protection, education, health, participation and development of children.

Since the special session on children, the Federation has attached even greater importance to the role of those working with children at the grass-roots level. To further improve the training of these workers, workshops on women and children have been organized at various levels and vigorous efforts have been made to utilize international resources and introduce good international practices.

Steps have been taken to create a favourable external environment and opportunities for children's participation, and related efforts have been made in various areas, including awareness-raising, to help bring about a better understanding of girls.

China is the developing country with the largest population in the world, and the Chinese Government and all sectors of its society have made unremitting efforts to bring about a world fit for children. Although major achievements have been registered, there are still difficulties and challenges ahead. We will, as always, abide by the principle of "children first", and we will continue to promote the survival, protection, development and participation of children and to strive to build a better future for them.

Ms. Rustam (Indonesia): On behalf of my delegation, I would like first of all to extend our appreciation to you, Sir, for your resolute efforts to ensure the successful work of this body. I would like also to commend the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Follow-up to the United Nations special session on children".

A year ago, world leaders and heads of State, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), children's advocates and young people themselves gathered here, on the occasion of the twenty-eighth special session of the General Assembly, to decide the future of the children and adolescents of the world. The outcome of

that special session, "A world fit for children", is an essential document which outlines goals, strategies and actions towards the creation of a liveable world for children.

In order to ensure the realization of a world fit for children, we must reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the outcome of the special session. A year or so later, it is also important that we use this opportunity to share our experiences in the implementation of the outcome document.

The Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children" form the basis for the Indonesian Government to advance national development planning for children and child-rights-based programmes. The Government is currently finalizing the National Programme for Children in Indonesia 2015. That programme addresses the key issues of child health and nutrition, children and HIV, early childhood care and development, basic nine-year education, and child protection.

As far as child health is concerned, the Indonesian Government has introduced specific policies focusing on the promotion of community nutrition education, family nutrition improvement, food fortification, and implementation of food and nutrition surveillance systems. The Government has also translated its vision into the Healthy Indonesia 2010 programme, using a life-cycle approach to address specific health and nutrition issues.

As a child is closely linked to his or her mother, ensuring the health of mothers and reducing maternal mortality is essential. The Government has since 2001 initiated various programmes and initiatives for that purpose, including the National Safe Motherhood Programme and the Making Pregnancy Safer Strategy.

Despite the fact that the number of HIV/AIDS cases among children remains low, the Indonesian Government has taken proactive measures to prevent the spread of the epidemic, especially among children, through, for example, mother-to-child transmission. The Government's commitment to combating the disease is reflected in the new National Strategy to Combat HIV/AIDS 2003-2007.

We believe that the quality of the care received by a child in its first years of life are of fundamental importance to its development. A child's first years make up the formative period, when children undergo

great leaps in physical, social, intellectual and emotional development. Under the current National Development Plan, the Government is looking into the possibility of cooperating with local educational institutions to provide training for teachers and facilitators of early childhood education. We also promote social awareness of early childhood care and development among parents in order to sensitize them to the idea of structured early-stimulation programmes.

As regards providing children with education, we focus on enhancing access to, and improving the quality of, education. At this stage, Indonesia has already achieved a 95 per cent net enrolment of children aged seven to 12 years of age in primary schools. We are continuing our efforts to provide nine years of quality basic education to all children.

We also pay particular attention to the issues of child labour, child trafficking and sexually exploited children, and to the emerging issues of children's involvement in the use, production and distribution of illicit drugs. We recognize these problems and continue our efforts to strengthen coordination and collaboration among the relevant institutions, including through the involvement of civil society, to address the problem.

The Government of Indonesia is currently working to increase understanding of child-protection issues by developing a profile of Indonesian children, which draws from available statistics and academic research. Mapping, rapid assessments and other studies are being carried out by institutions with the assistance of a number of donor agencies.

Indonesia also continues to emphasize the importance of international cooperation in addressing issues concerning the promotion of the well-being of children and the protection of their rights. International cooperation is essential in particular to the strengthening of national capacity-building, in order effectively to implement the outcome document of the special session on children.

Before I conclude, let me add a few words regarding the Bali Consensus — the outcome of the sixth East Asia and the Pacific Ministerial Consultation on Children — which was mentioned in the Secretary-General's report.

The Bali Consensus contains commitments on building partnerships with and for children and young people. The document lists focus areas for regional

cooperation, recommends effective partnerships, and identifies goals and principles of action. The Consensus emphasizes partnerships as an integral part of realizing the Millennium Development Goals and the 2002 "A world fit for children" Plan of Action.

The Consensus argues that we should involve all sectors of society in our partnerships, including children and young people; families; Governments; parliamentarians; NGOs; community-based organizations; the private sector; civil society; religious, spiritual, cultural, indigenous, and traditional leaders; the mass media, regional and international organizations; and donor partners.

In our efforts to improve the lives of children in the East Asia and Pacific region, the Consensus has identified four focus areas for cooperation. These include: HIV/AIDS; trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children; maternal and neonatal mortality; and child malnutrition. The first two issues are new and complicated challenges to the countries in the region. The last two issues, on the other hand, are relatively longstanding and tend to be intractable.

In fulfilling our policy commitments to children in our region, we have agreed that all policies and actions that affect children and young people must be guided by the spirit and principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We have also agreed to ensure peace and stability and to reduce poverty in order to guarantee the fulfilment of the rights of all children and young people; improve the quality, accessibility and equity of education in order to achieve our goals; and promote the active and meaningful participation and empowerment of women, children and young people in all activities that affect their lives, including involvement in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and in the implementation of the outcome document "A World Fit for Children".

It is our hope that the international community and the United Nations will maintain their support for our regional efforts as we strive to create a world fit for generations to come.

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Chau (Viet Nam): I would like to express Viet Nam's high appreciation and sincere thanks to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report on follow-up to the special session on children (A/58/333). It sums up the global endeavour in favour of the interests of children.

The specific goals are set forth in the Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex): to promote healthy lives; to provide quality education; to protect children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and to combat HIV/AIDS. This is actually the least we could do for our children, who we all agree are not only the future but also the masters of the country and the world.

We are pleased to note that as many as 140 countries have taken concrete actions to translate those commitments into action and to integrate them into their existing national plans and policies. Special care has been given to children by intensifying programmes for vaccines and immunization, for the eradication of polio and malaria and for improving nutrition. Progress has been made: more than 80 per cent of school-aged children are enrolled in school globally, and the quality of basic education has improved dramatically.

However, it is sad to know that while progress has been made, children around the world continue to suffer. Nearly 200 million children under five years of age are malnourished, 11 million of whom die each year. More than 100 million children still have no access to education; 250 million children have to work for a living, of which 180 million are engaged in the worst forms of child labour. Forty million suffer from abuse and neglect, while thousands more are infected with HIV/AIDS. We are also particularly concerned over the alarming issue of the sexual exploitation and illegal trafficking of children. It is therefore high time for the international community to cooperate and take resolute measures to prevent and put an end to such situations.

In Viet Nam, it is a national tradition, as well as a consistent policy of the State, to provide children with the best in protection, care and education. As early as 1991, immediately after the 1990 World Summit for Children, a national programme of action for the protection and care of children was promulgated. Its objectives for the period 1991 to 2000 have successfully been achieved. Now, the whole nation, from its centre to the grass-roots level, is mobilized to implement the 2001-2010 national programme of action, which defines specific goals for nutrition, health care, primary education, clean water and environment, culture, leisure and recreation for children. In short, it will ensure the children's fundamental rights and cater for all their needs.

Under the guiding spirit of "A world fit for children", as stated in the Declaration and Programme of Action of the special session on children, our Government's budget for the social sector increased considerably — by 30 per cent — for the period 1995 to 2000 and is on the increase. As a result, children now have much better access to health care, education and protection. The picture is bright. The mortality rate of children under five was reduced to 42 per 1,000 — compared to the target of 50 of 1,000; 93.3 per cent of children from 1 to 6 years of age have been immunized against six basic diseases — the target was 90 per cent; 100 per cent of diseases related to vitamin A deficiency have been eliminated; the malnutrition rate was reduced from 51.5 per cent in 1990 to 33.1 per cent in 2000; in 2000, polio was thoroughly eradicated; 100 per cent of provinces and cities succeeded in eradicating illiteracy and universalizing primary education; 93 per cent of 6-year-old children go to school, compared to the target of 90 per cent.

It is obvious that achievements have been recorded in the field of the promotion and protection of the rights of the child in Viet Nam. However, we are fully aware that much remains to be done to meet the challenges. We would like to express our most sincere thanks to the many international organizations, particularly UNICEF, and friends around the world who have provided us with generous support and assistance. Viet Nam is ready to share, as well as to learn from the experiences of others so that we can work together to fulfil our goal of creating a world fit for children.

We all had our childhood, which may have been full of happiness or sorrow and sadness. However it was, our obligations and responsibilities are to ensure by all means that our children, our future, will enjoy a life filled with laughter, fun and joy.

Ms. Jahan (Bangladesh): The special session of the General Assembly on children, held in May 2002, provided a unique opportunity to pledge our renewed commitment to build a safe and happy world for our children. The outcome document, entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex), provided a comprehensive work programme to ensure for every child a decent, secure and fulfilling life. Bangladesh was privileged to be actively involved with the process both as a facilitator and as a Vice-Chairman of the Preparatory Committee. Earlier, in 1990, at the World

Summit for Children, world leaders committed themselves to the specific goals of children's survival and development and protection of their rights.

As we pause to reflect on our achievements, we must ask ourselves whether our children are better off today than they were a decade ago. If they are not, then we must rededicate ourselves with renewed vigour and sincerity in addressing their special concerns. The overall situation of children in many parts of the world remains critical. Children continue to be the most vulnerable victims of poverty, armed conflict, trafficking, displacement, HIV/AIDS and many forms of discrimination and abuse, including sexual exploitation. Other equally formidable challenges, such as illiteracy, hunger, malnutrition and a high incidence of child mortality, physical and mental disabilities, persist and threaten the very survival and the development of millions of children worldwide. It certainly is a sad commentary on our times.

While we note that the global situation of children remains far from ideal, we must nonetheless recognize the forward movement, however little it may have been, that has taken place in parts of the world.

In translating our international commitments at the national level, Bangladesh has adopted a national plan of action for children. The survival of children, their protection against killer diseases and education are important priorities of the plan, which focuses on the girl child. The decade 2001 to 2010 has been declared the Decade of the Rights of the Child in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh is committed to the four major priority concerns, as specified in the outcome document of the special session, "A world fit for children": promoting healthy lives; providing quality education; protecting children from abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS.

In our national budget, allocations have been significantly increased for education and primary health care. To be more specific, the highest allocation of resources has been placed with the education sector. We have achieved a commendable record in school enrolment, which now stands at 93.3 per cent. Primary education has been made compulsory for all, and free for girls up to the twelfth grade. Girl children are also awarded stipends and scholarships. These special incentives have brought parity in girls' enrolment, with a positive impact on the age of marriage and on the

health of women and children. Innovative ideas in the area of informal education, including our food-for-education programme and microcredit programmes, have also facilitated the well-being of children, particularly the girl child.

Remarkable progress has been made in reducing child mortality and malnutrition through an extended immunization programme. Progress has also been achieved in reducing iodine deficiency disorders. Vitamin A supplementation, oral rehydration therapy and programmes on safe motherhood have also saved millions of children's lives.

Within its limited resources, Bangladesh is striving hard to provide access to safe drinking water for its population, including children. However, the magnitude of the arsenic problem remains a critical concern. We hope relevant international bodies, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization, will be forthcoming in assisting us in this regard.

Although Bangladesh figures among the low-prevalence countries affected by HIV/AIDS, as a precautionary measure we have adopted a national policy on HIV/AIDS with a focus on children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Special programmes have also been undertaken for children with disabilities. The Government runs 64 integrated schools for visually impaired children; these are found in all district headquarters of the country. Programmes have also been undertaken for abandoned and street children.

Significant achievements have been made in phasing out child labour from the garment industry with the active support of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF.

Our success in all these areas should not give us reason for complacency. Among the issues that would need our urgent attention in sustaining our gains is poverty eradication. Our national efforts in that regard need to be supplemented by active and sustained international cooperation. Similarly, the Government and civil society must act in partnership in promoting the growth and the development of our children.

Bangladesh is fully committed to the protection and the promotion of human rights of children. We were one of the first countries to sign and ratify the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We are also one

of the first few countries that has ratified the two Optional Protocols to the Convention.

At the regional level, we have signed the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia. Bangladesh played a pioneering role in the adoption of the SAARC Convention on Preventing and Combating the Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution.

The elimination of trafficking in persons, especially children, has been accorded particular priority in Bangladesh. A national advisory committee has been established to combat trafficking. Stringent legislative acts aimed at protecting women and children, in particular girls, from all forms of abuse, exploitation, violence and discrimination have been enacted.

However, we are aware that legal reforms and legislation alone are not enough, unless they are effectively followed and implemented. We, nonetheless, are making our best endeavours to provide for children's development against a social backdrop where values of pluralism, democracy, human rights, family tradition and cultural norms are pervasive. Such a society, we believe, is the best school for a child's upbringing.

There are some other areas of concern on which we must focus further. Our experiences reveal that the trauma of armed conflict spares none, but that the worst affected by far are children. The international community, including the United Nations, must aim at reinforcing international action concerning children in armed conflict and in refugee situations.

We must work closely in support of children in a consistent fashion. Children deserve to be at the very heart of our development agenda. They must be a central focus of international cooperation. We must be able to mobilize adequate international resources to supplement national efforts aimed at promoting the growth and development of our children. As we meet here today, a deep sense of realization dawns on us that much still remains to be done in transforming our commitments into concrete actions that will lead to a better world for our children.

In conclusion, I would like to recall what our Prime Minister Begum Khaleda Zia stated at the special session on children in May last year:

"Our children are our greatest asset, the source of our joy and the future of our nations, our countries and the world. ...

"...

"... The Assembly finds Bangladesh at the forefront of efforts to give our children the best possible first start in life. I am confident that all of us gathered here will also do the same".
(A/S-27/PV.2, pp. 1-2)

Mr. Kirn (Slovenia): Slovenia associates itself with and fully endorses the statement made earlier by the Italian presidency of the European Union. Since the rights of the child are a very important part of Slovenia's domestic and foreign policy agendas, we should like in our national capacity to highlight a number of issues regarding the implementation of the outcome of the special session on children.

Last year, States Members of the United Nations adopted "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex), which includes a Declaration and a Plan of Action. It is definitely an ambitious agenda that requires comprehensive action. It may be too early to review overall implementation of the outcome, yet today's discussion is important for sharing experiences and practices — especially at the national level — and for ensuring that the political attention devoted to the subject is as strong as it was one year ago.

"A world fit for children" is an important supplement to the Millennium Declaration, since it accommodates the implementation of relevant Millennium Development Goals for the best interests of children. From the human rights perspective, "A world fit for children" emphasizes clearly that the focus of international action should be guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols as the ultimate references in protecting and promoting the rights and well-being of children. It is our hope that that can be reaffirmed by universal ratification of the Convention in the near future. Since economic and social development and the protection of human rights — including the rights of the child — are interlinked and inseparable, we warmly welcome the rights-based approach to development cooperation programmes, which has been implemented by the United Nations Children's Fund and other United Nations agencies.

Allow me to highlight a number of activities that are taking place in Slovenia as immediate follow-up measures to the special session, all being implemented in strong partnerships between relevant governmental institutions and civil society organizations, especially the Slovenian National Committee for UNICEF. As a first step, the outcome document "A world fit for children" has been translated into the Slovenian language and has also been published in a modified form that is easily understandable by young children. It is being widely distributed to all kindergartens, schools and other educational institutions.

Slovenia's Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, together with the National Committee for UNICEF, is preparing a national plan of action for children for the period 2003 to 2013, to be adopted by the national Parliament next spring. It includes all issues and areas affecting the lives of children and adolescents in modern society and emphasizes Slovenia's international obligations as a future member of the European Union. According to the plan, the new institution of an ombudsman for children is to be established, either as an independent body or within the framework of the existing office of the human rights ombudsman. In addition, a special governmental office will be created to more effectively coordinate various intersectoral activities related to children's well-being. Implementation of the national plan of action will be monitored by the so-called child observatory, given the importance of active participation by children in decision-making that affects their lives.

All priority areas of the outcome document "A world fit for children" are equally important, and equal attention should be devoted to all of them. But there is one area of particular concern for Slovenia and its foreign policy agenda: protection from abuse, exploitation and violence, with an emphasis on children in armed conflict. In the past two years, we have witnessed important developments in that field in addition to the document "A world fit for children": the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the adoption of relevant Security Council resolutions and the establishment of the International Criminal Court.

In addition to global efforts, regional and inter-regional action is needed. Slovenia highly appreciates being a member of the Human Security Network, a group of like-minded countries from all regions of the

world. The protection of children in armed conflict is one of the priorities of the Network's agenda, and Slovenia warmly welcomes that.

It is not possible to build sustainable peace unless children are provided with rehabilitation and faith in the future. Several years ago, mindful of the importance of children for the prosperity of post-conflict societies, Slovenia decided to establish an institution to assist war-affected children: the "Together" Centre for the Psycho-social Well-being of Children. The basic principle of the centre is to strengthen local structures in the childcare field and to develop new mechanisms for children's protection and empowerment that will remain in the region even after international assistance has been withdrawn. The centre has expanded its activities to all post-conflict areas of South-Eastern Europe and outside the region. In close cooperation with Slovenia, Austria and Jordan, the centre and its other partners have already initiated various rehabilitation programmes for Iraq.

In conclusion, I should like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report (A/58/333), which identifies many positive results that have already been achieved. Yet there is still much to be done to fully implement the provisions of "A world fit for children", so let us demonstrate the necessary political will and commitment in that respect. Finally, our gratitude goes to UNICEF and its marvellous staff who are working in the field to make our words and "A world fit for children" a reality.

Ms. Bethel (Bahamas): A little over a year ago, world leaders gathered in New York to reaffirm their commitment to building a world truly fit for children. The twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly was notable not only for the levels of political will manifested and the adoption of a set of time-bound goals to improve the state of the world's children, but also for the participation of children themselves, for the first time, in the work of the General Assembly. Their presence in New York reminded us of the importance of the task at hand, and the impact of their attendance should stay with us as we examine the measures that we have already undertaken and those that remain as we commit ourselves to building a world fit for them and succeeding generations.

My delegation thanks the Secretary-General for presenting the comprehensive report we have before us.

The report shows that there have been mixed results thus far in implementing the Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the special session, and that, unfortunately, there has been a lack of consistent and systematic follow-up to this point. My delegation trusts that our consideration of this item at this session will provide a new impetus to the critical follow-up process.

The Secretary-General's report offers a timely reminder that all of the actions undertaken by the international community ultimately have an impact on the world's children. Accordingly, the commitments we undertook at the major conferences and summits of the 1990s and in more recent times are about children, whether we realized it at the time or not. The outcomes of the World Summit for Social Development and its five-year review; the Fourth World Conference on Women and its five-year review; the International Conference on Financing for Development; and the World Summit for Sustainable Development have committed us to a series of actions that will truly test our commitment to creating social and economic development, eradicating poverty, preventing environmental degradation, and ultimately preserving our world for future generations. These commitments are perhaps best captured in the Millennium Development Goals, and we call on all States to reaffirm their commitment to implementing these Goals.

In that context, my delegation wishes to reiterate the importance of international cooperation and assistance in meeting these Goals. We have set ourselves a truly ambitious agenda, which no State can achieve alone. Accordingly, resource mobilization at the national and particularly the international level, through official development assistance, debt relief and international assistance, is critical to ensuring that all States are able to meet their obligations, particularly those that affect the daily lives and future of the world's children.

The Bahamas is a young nation, both in terms of its political independence and in terms of its population. According to the most recent national census, 35 per cent of the population is under the age of 18. Thus it is an imperative that actions be undertaken to safeguard the well-being of that segment of our population. We recognize that our future development and prosperity depend on our children, and it is with this reality in mind that the Bahamas

Government has sought to translate its commitment to children into a series of significant national actions.

As an archipelagic State, the Bahamas faces peculiar difficulties in the delivery of social and other services to the populations of each of its 22 inhabited islands. Notwithstanding those difficulties, however, the Government of the Bahamas has committed itself to providing social and other services to the entire population of the country — a commitment that has necessitated duplication of infrastructure in each of the islands and the allocation of scarce resources in this regard.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child remains the overarching framework for the Bahamas as it seeks to safeguard the well-being of the nation's children and to meet its obligations in each of the designated areas of promoting healthy lives; providing quality education; protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS.

The Bahamas recognizes that the health of a nation is the wealth of a nation, and that, without a healthy population, no development and progress can be achieved. Accordingly, the Government of the Bahamas has devoted considerable resources to providing universal access to health care in each of our islands. We are pleased that we have been able to secure a dramatic reduction in infant mortality rates over the last decade, and the Ministry of Health is working, in partnership with other Government agencies, to continue to reduce those rates. Considerable focus has also been placed on the importance of immunization in halting the spread of preventable childhood diseases. Accordingly, immunization rates stand at 90 per cent for children under the age of five, and efforts are continuing to increase this figure.

Equal emphasis is placed on the importance of educating our children, to enable them to take their places as productive members of society and to contribute to the development of the nation. Accordingly, the Government of the Bahamas devotes the single largest share of the national budget to providing universal access to education for all up to the age of 16. Free primary and secondary education is available to all Bahamians on a non-discriminatory basis. The Government has also provided free pre-school education at many of its public schools. The Bahamas seeks to provide a well-rounded quality

education, including technical and vocational training and access to information technology, to its children, to provide the best possible start for our young people and to provide them with the tools they need to make their way in the world.

The sad reality of violence against, and abuse and exploitation of, children is one that none of us in the international community has been able fully to prevent. The Bahamas is, however, fully committed to eradicating any practices that would harm our children and prevent them from enjoying their full human rights. The Bahamas has a legislative framework in place that seeks to protect children, augmented by the work of Government agencies with a mandate to investigate instances of abuse and violence, and to intervene when necessary.

The Government is constantly reviewing that framework in an effort to ensure that the nation's children are not vulnerable to those that would seek to do them harm and to meet its international obligations in this regard. When we put our children at risk, we put our future at risk, and we will take every step necessary to ensure that this does not happen.

As is well known, the HIV/AIDS pandemic has ravaged the world and threatens the development prospects of many nations. The Caribbean region is the second-worst-affected region in the world, and the Bahamas has not been exempted from this. The Bahamas Government has waged an intensive campaign against the pandemic, through the provision of care, treatment and prevention programmes, coupled with awareness-raising and education activities.

Children are perhaps the most innocent victims of this disease, and the Bahamas has sought to limit its impact on our children. Accordingly, the Bahamas has sought to increase access to antiretroviral drugs, particularly for HIV-positive pregnant women, and has recorded a reduction in the rate of mother-to-child transmission to 3 per cent in 2002. The Bahamas has also taken action with respect to the increasing numbers of HIV orphans. While we cherish the extended family that continues to characterize our nation, the Government has also taken steps to intervene where that extended family cannot, to provide care and support for these children. Our commitment to combating HIV/AIDS, and particularly its impact on children, will not wane.

While national action will ultimately prove most effective in protecting the world's children and safeguarding their well-being, my delegation wishes to stress the importance of regional and international action. In that context, my delegation wishes to pay tribute to the work of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and of other specialized agencies in the United Nations system for the steady work they have undertaken in pursuit of the vision contained in "A world fit for children". We look forward to continuing to work in fruitful partnership with those agencies in that regard.

The view has been expressed in some quarters that the United Nations has become nothing more than a talk shop from which concrete action rarely emanates. In fulfilling our obligations to the world's children, let us put the lie to this assertion. The world's future depends on the actions we take today. Let us safeguard the welfare and well-being of our children. Let us not fail them, and ourselves, and reaffirm our commitment to building a world that is truly fit for children.

Ms. Ognjanovac (Croatia): The twenty-second special session of the General Assembly, on children, reaffirmed our strong commitment to building a world fit for children. By adopting its outcome document, we committed ourselves to finishing the agenda of the 1990 World Summit for Children and to achieving the goals and objectives for the better protection of children's rights set out in the Millennium Declaration. Much has been done since then and good progress has been achieved, but as the Secretary-General reported in his report on the follow-up to the United Nations special session on children (A/58/333), the work has just started.

In this light, my delegation would like to emphasize that strong international cooperation is essential for the effective implementation of international standards for the protection of the well-being of children by each and every State is a sine qua non towards full promotion and protection of the rights of children.

As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its two Optional Protocols; the International Labour Organization Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention and the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its supplementing Protocols, Croatia attaches

importance to the protection of children's rights and calls upon the States that have not yet ratified those instruments to do so.

In an effort to ensure full implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children, my Government has undertaken various initiatives aimed at further strengthening children's human rights.

In July 2003 the Croatian Government adopted a revised National Programme of Action for children, containing, inter alia, a chapter on priority activities for the well-being of children for the period 2003-2005. The principles and priorities outlined in this chapter were drawn up from the agreed international time-bound goals and translated into practice, taking into account the specific needs of children at the local and national levels. National non-governmental organizations and children and young people were involved in the process of developing the programme, as well as in its implementation.

National mechanisms for the protection and promotion of children's rights have been further strengthened by the adoption of a children's ombudsman's law and the consequent appointment of an ombudsman. An Ombudsman's office was established as an autonomous and non-partisan institution that will monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international instruments ratified by the Republic of Croatia in the field of children's rights.

The office will also coordinate the work of everyone involved in the protection of children's rights, including those who are responsible for the protection of children against all forms of violence. In addition, the office will inform the public of the situation of children's rights, promote and protect, inter alia, the rights of children with special needs and consider requests related to the protection of children's rights and interests put forward by any institution or individual.

In Croatia, special attention has been devoted to, and child rights issues were incorporated in other policies created to enhance the human rights of some of the most vulnerable members of society. For example, the National Family Policy adopted by the Government in January 2003 proposes measures for the promotion of health care for children, especially measures for the protection of infants. It also puts forward measures for

the improvement of health care for women, particularly during pregnancy and child birth, preventive activities focused on maintaining and improving the health of girls and educational programmes for medical personnel working in the field of family health care.

The National Plan for the Suppression of Trafficking in Persons, that is being implemented successfully, envisages measures for the creation of an adequate legislative framework for instituting proceedings and providing for sanctions against perpetrators who provide assistance and protection to trafficked persons, especially women and children who are victims of trafficking, as well as measures aimed at the prevention of trafficking in human beings.

To ensure better legal protection for the victims of domestic violence, regardless of their age and sex, the Croatian Parliament earlier this year adopted a Law on the Protection against Domestic Violence. The Law defines actions that qualify as domestic violence, stipulates various legal sanctions for perpetrators and provides protective measures against the perpetrator, such as obligatory psycho-therapeutic and psychiatric treatment when necessary, issuing restraining orders, prohibiting harassment or stalking of a person or exposing a person to violence, as well as a measure mandating immediate eviction of a violent member from a family household.

The Penal Code of the Republic of Croatia contains key laws covering the area of violence against children, in particular sexual violence. In its chapter VI, the law defines criminal acts against family and youth and provides sanctions against those committing various acts that are harmful to children and minors.

Although significant progress has been made in Croatia in the area of the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, the Croatian Government remains committed to working further to create a child-friendly environment and supports every initiative that effectively contributes to the full achievement of international legal standards for the protection of the well-being of children and to the realization of the Declaration and Plan of Action of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children.

Mr. Mekdad (Syria) (spoke in Arabic): The issue of the rights of children occupies a special place of interest and importance to the Syrian Government. This can be seen through carefully implemented national plans that have been followed up by the highest

political authority in Syria. The President of the Republic has personally given this issue a great deal of attention and has followed up on the projects and activities that provide services to children, either in the countryside or in the cities. In this vein, a higher Committee for Children was established in 1999, in which all Governmental and non-governmental organizations participate in following up on all issues concerning children, including the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified by Syria in 1993, and the implementation of the twenty-seventh special session of the General Assembly on children, held in 2002.

On the regional level, Syria effectively participates in all Arab conferences concerning issues relating to children. An Arab plan of action on children will be adopted at a high-level conference that will be held early next year. At the international level, Syria this year joined the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which deal with the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict and the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

Syria also acceded in 2001 to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. The minimum age for employment in Syria has been raised to 15 years of age. Moreover, Syria acceded to ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. It also cooperates with many international agencies in combating child labour, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Syria submitted its periodic national report this summer after its accession to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and it will carefully consider all the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. After discussion of the report, the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva decided, in cooperation with the Syrian Government, to hold a workshop in Damascus from 22 to 24 October 2003 to discuss all issues regarding children and to shed light on the achievements of the Government in that regard. Syria takes pride in its achievements so far with regard to implementation of the objectives of the World Summit for Children of 1990, particularly in education and health care, and following-up the

implementation of the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children in 2002.

Given the shortage of time, we would like to mention just a few of these achievements. Our national health strategy relies on expanding the sphere of primary health care to reach the countryside and to achieve equality between urban and rural areas. Health care and compulsory education are available to all citizens free of charge. Females comprise 48 per cent of all students in pre-college levels. In the education sector, the Ministry of Education is working on developing a curriculum for students that will introduce the concept of the rights of children.

The "Healthy Village" programme in Syria is a pioneer programme that considers the well-being of the human being a development objective and a means to improve the quality of life of citizens. The programme pays great attention to the development of the child and the enablement of women and to improving the environment and the workplace in order to increase the income of all sectors of society. Many international and non-governmental organizations contribute actively to that programme.

Despite these achievements, the Syrian Government cannot reach all children in Syria, since thousands of those children have been living under Israeli occupation in the Syrian Golan since 1967. Those children suffer from the daily coercive actions of the occupying forces; for example, the closure of educational institutions, the prohibition of Syrian books and curricula, and the imposition of Israeli curricula and Israeli citizenship in an attempt to erase the national identity of the younger generation. Also, we must not forget to mention the thousands of families that have been displaced and whose property has been confiscated since the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan.

My delegation has carefully reviewed the Secretary-General's report on the follow-up to the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children and we express our appreciation of the efforts made in the preparation of such an important document. It is the first report to describe the progress achieved at both the regional and global levels in the follow-up to the special session on children, and in particular the measures taken in the implementation of the four main objectives of the Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children". We would like to

state that the next report on the issue should be a little more detailed, particularly when addressing the issues of protecting children from violence, abuse and exploitation, in particular children in armed conflict and under foreign occupation. The final outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on children specifically mentioned such children. Children in the occupied Palestinian territories suffer daily at the hands of Israel owing to the continued repressive measures of the Israeli occupation forces, which the entire world can see on television screens everyday. The international community must put an end to all practices that violate the rights of children.

We would also like to stress the importance of paragraph 74 of the report concerning the study being prepared on violence against children. We believe that this study should be more factual when describing the violence that children are exposed to during armed conflict and under foreign occupation, so that the report will be more reliable and more objective. We look forward to progress in this study.

Finally, we would like to stress the importance of addressing children's issues without selectivity or double standards, if we are to prepare a sound generation for the future. Human beings are both a goal and a means of development, and as such should be part and parcel of the social development process.

In spite of all the achievements of the past decade in the field of caring for children, we stress that there is need for more work and intensified efforts to attain a better standard of living for all children. We believe that we have a strong foundation to go forward towards reaching our objectives as embodied in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the outcome of the General Assembly's special session on children.

Mr. Requeijo Gual (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): During the 1990 World Summit for Children and the special session of the General Assembly on children in 2002, many commitments were made to improve the standard of living of all children throughout the world, to increase their chances for and materials necessary for survival, to improve health and sanitation services, to combat curable diseases and reduce their spread, create new opportunities for education, increase available food and keep children out of danger.

However, for most of the children in the world, these commitments will never become a reality. We cannot share the enthusiasm in the Secretary-General's

report. How can we share it when, as this report and other United Nations reports indicate, 3.1 million HIV/AIDS victims are under 15 years of age; only 1 per cent of persons affected by HIV/AIDS in Africa have access to retroviral medication and some 6,000 young people between 15-24 years of age are infected by this terrible disease each day? How can we be optimistic when 250 million children must work in order to survive, and almost 180 million must take up the worst forms of child labour; when 1.2 million children are enslaved each year and some other 2 million are exploited by prostitution and pornography; and approximately 40 million children suffer from mistreatment and abandonment? How can we refer to successful plans when 500 million children still live in extreme poverty; 100 million are not in school and many more receive inadequate education; some 150 million children in the developing world are malnourished and 11 million children under 5 years of age die each year from preventable diseases? The preparation of national plans of action, the harmonization of laws and policies, proper national management of public affairs and implementation of programmes on children are still insufficient for there to be a world fit for children, in which the children of some four-fifths of humanity could enjoy a proper life.

What chances for success can these policies or domestic activities have, when developing countries are witnessing a decrease in the amount of official development aid they receive and are losing approximately \$100 billion dollars that had been pledged by the industrialized countries? What kind of material support can national activities of the third-world countries receive when their most competitive export products cannot enter the markets of the developed countries because of the protectionist measures the developed countries impose, including farm subsidies at an amount of more than \$300 billion dollars?

What conditions exist for developing countries to pursue their own plans when the already precarious investment flows to those countries continue to decrease; when they are net exporters of capital; when they are impeded from accessing advanced technologies; and when they continue to expend \$350 billion annually — which represents approximately 20 per cent of their exports — solely to pay for a foreign debt servicing that UNICEF once said had the face of a child?

Without the adoption by industrialized countries of a philosophy based on solidarity that makes it possible for them to meet their international cooperation commitments, the efforts of developing countries will be useless in solving the serious problems of childhood. Likewise, in order to address those problems one must effectively implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the governing international instrument in the promotion of the rights of the child, which provides an indispensable framework to confront those challenges. Similarly, we must work with the two Optional Protocols to the Convention — one on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, which my country has already ratified, and the other on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which Cuba has signed and is currently evaluating with a view to its ratification.

With regard to the need to promote an international climate of peace, it is unfortunate that developing countries — and especially the most powerful nations — are doing little to address or solve the main causes of armed conflicts and other conflicts stemming from the vestiges of colonialism, widespread poverty, increasing inequalities within and outside countries, social and political crises, the manipulation of ethnic, cultural and religious differences, and foreign occupation and domination.

For over four decades, Cuba has been subjected to an iron-fisted, economic, commercial and financial blockade. That blockade has been tightened in the past year, and its extra-territorial application has been expanded. That has created serious impediments to access to educational materials and to the acquisition of technologies, raw materials, reagents, diagnostic instruments and necessary medical equipment and medication, including vital medicines necessary to ensure the survival of children with cancer.

As part of its hostile policy against Cuba, the country blockading us is also attempting to place us on a list of violating countries and to impose illegal sanctions against us on the basis of Cuba's supposed support for the trafficking in women and children. That country, which has no moral authority to refer to Cuba, has 400,000 children involved in prostitution and is host to the trafficking of 50,000 women and girls annually, mostly for the purposes of prostitution. Those baseless accusations are politically motivated and are an attempt to tarnish the results achieved by Cuba with

regard to women and children, which have been internationally recognized as exemplary achievements.

Cuba has made remarkable progress in caring for children, despite its scarce resources and the fact that it is a country affected by a genocidal blockade. Cuba's comprehensive policy for the development of children is based on social assistance programmes that are premised on equality of opportunity and social justice with regard to the distribution of resources and Cuba's comprehensive delivery of childhood services. That policy has made it possible for Cuba to surpass every benchmark and goal set by the 1990 and 2002 meetings on children.

The mortality rate for children under one year of age in my country is 6.5 per 1,000 live births. One hundred per cent of our children are immunized against 13 preventable diseases. One hundred per cent of pregnant women receive obstetric care, and 99 per cent of births take place in hospitals. Every child and young person has free access to a classroom and teacher. Primary school enrolment is at 100 per cent, with a rate of 95 per cent at the secondary school level. There is one teacher for every 42 inhabitants and 20 students per classroom in primary schools. We are working so that very soon there will be no more than 15 students per classroom in secondary schools.

In order to improve and expand education, there are programmes under way to equip every instructional centre with the computers necessary to provide education. To date, 46,290 computers have been installed in schools at the pre-school, primary and secondary levels, including in every rural school. Two thousand, three hundred and sixty-eight schools have been equipped with electric solar panels in order to take advantage of computers, including at 93 schools where there is a single student. We have begun transmission at a new educational television channel, and we will soon introduce a second channel for the same purpose.

Unless we make way for solidarity, end selfishness and put in place a more just, sustainable and equitable international economic order, it will be very difficult for "A world fit for children" to become a reality for the majority of the world's children.

Mr. Swe (Myanmar): At the outset, I wish to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/58/333), which has provided us with a sound basis for our discussion today.

The special session on children, which took place in May 2002, has done much to promote the cause of children. The outcome document adopted by the General Assembly, entitled "A world fit for children", provides us with a platform to build upon in ensuring that no child is left behind. The Secretary-General's report shows that the progress made to date represents a good start, but that tremendous challenges lie ahead. The Secretary-General also stressed in his report that investing effectively in children is a powerful force to achieve true sustainable development. We fully subscribe to that view.

May I apprise the Assembly of my country's investment in its most valuable resource, our children, by focusing on four main priorities that are incorporated in our national action plan.

First, with regard to providing quality education for all, the Government of Myanmar attaches great importance to education, and is currently implementing a 30-year, long-term national education promotion programme to ensure that all children of school-going age can attend school. The primary school enrolment rate for the 2002-2003 academic year was 93.07 per cent. Over 7.5 million students are currently enrolled in over 40,000 basic primary schools — which is to say, primary- and secondary-level schools — throughout the country. Nearly 900,000 students are enrolled in the country's 154 universities and colleges this year. The Government has allocated 39 billion kyats to the Ministry of Education for this academic year alone. E-education, which was launched in Myanmar on 1 January 2001, is gathering momentum, and every year more e-education learning centres, e-education resource centres and multi-media class rooms are being established at both the basic education level and at the university and college levels.

Secondly, with regard to promoting healthy lives, the national plan of action is being implemented by the relevant ministries, United Nations agencies and national and international non-governmental organizations. As a result of the various programmes undertaken, there has been a marked drop in the infant mortality and the under-five mortality rates. The immunization coverage of six major diseases for infants under one year of age and vitamin A supplementation for children under five years of age have also increased significantly.

Thirdly, with regard to protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence, Myanmar acceded to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1991. In order to further promote the rights of children, Myanmar promulgated its child law in 1993. A series of national-level plans have been implemented to achieve the goals pertaining to the survival, protection and development of children. Those efforts are under the supervision of the National Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Child affairs in Myanmar are under the purview of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement. Apart from playing a coordinating role, the Ministry's Department of Social Welfare also operates early child care and development centres and cares for orphans and abandoned children at its 20 training centres and 143 centres run by voluntary organizations. Rehabilitation programmes for abandoned and abused children and for juvenile delinquents are also being carried out by the Social Welfare Department.

The Government of Myanmar has undertaken effective measures to combat the global phenomenon of human trafficking, particularly trafficking in women and children. Myanmar has put in place a national action plan for the prevention of trafficking in persons. The action plan is comprehensive in nature and encompasses strategies aimed at prevention, enforcement and prosecution, protection and repatriation, return and reintegration. Creating awareness through training programmes and the media are part of the preventive strategy. Effective enforcement measures are being carried out, and human traffickers are liable under the penal code of Myanmar. Jail sentences ranging from seven to 14 years have been meted out to offenders. Myanmar is now in the process of enacting a separate anti-human-trafficking law that will further serve as an effective deterrent.

Last but not least, with regard to combating HIV/AIDS, as part of its HIV/AIDS preventive strategy, Myanmar is educating its future leaders, the children. Our School-based Healthy Life Skills HIV/AIDS Prevention Education Project (SHAPE) has brought life-skills-based education on HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases (STD) to over 1 million school children in Myanmar, ranging in ages from seven through 15. SHAPE has been integrated into the national curriculum, and the project is being steadily

expanded to cover all schools in the country. National and international non-governmental organizations continue to play an active role in HIV/AIDS prevention and care, conducting community-level peer-education projects for young people and life-skills-based HIV/AIDS/STD training programmes. A new project in that area was launched in May of this year. The 2003-2005 adolescent reproductive health awareness project, which is funded by the United Nations Population Fund in collaboration with international and local non-governmental organizations, was launched to improve reproductive health information, education and services for young people.

Children's rights are human rights, and my delegation places special importance on promoting the rights of children everywhere. The recent Ministerial Declaration of the Meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Non-Aligned Movement, of which Myanmar is a founding member, reaffirmed the Movement's

"concern over the intolerable persistence of adverse social and economic conditions faced by children on account of poverty, use of children in armed conflict, including abduction of children for training as child mercenaries and in terrorism, mass killing of children in communal and sectarian violence, child labour, particularly the worst forms of child labour, the continued exploitation and trafficking of children for pornography, prostitution and drug trafficking, the sale of children and their organs, the increasing number of children affected by HIV/AIDS, as well as the suffering of refugee and displaced children especially in Africa. Urgent steps, including through international co-operation, must be undertaken to address these problems." (A/58/420, annex, para. 45)

Myanmar fully shares those concerns.

The Foreign Ministers also reaffirmed the Non-Aligned Movement's long-standing and principled position that all human rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. The Foreign Ministers also stressed "the importance of addressing the international human rights agenda in a fair and balanced manner" (*ibid.* para. 41). They also expressed their concern

"over the continued exploitation of human rights for political purposes, including selective targeting of individual countries for extraneous considerations, which are detrimental to the promotion and protection of all human rights for all." (*supra*)

Children are our future and our most valuable investment. It is particularly important to stress that politicizing this issue, which we all hold most dear, would be a disservice to the cause of children.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate that Myanmar will continue its serious efforts to achieve the goals set out by the special session on children to create a world fit for children.

Programme of work

The President: I would like to make an announcement regarding some changes to the programme of work of the General Assembly contained in document A/INF/58/4/Rev.1.

On Friday, 31 October 2003, in the morning, the General Assembly will consider as the second item agenda item 108, "Crime prevention and criminal justice", in order to take action on the draft United Nations Convention against Corruption, recommended by the Ad Hoc Committee for the Negotiation of a Convention against Corruption in a report to be circulated as document A/58/422.

On Monday, 3 November 2003, the General Assembly will consider as the first item agenda item 23, "Sport for peace and development", and its sub-items (a) and (b) in the morning rather than in the afternoon. After the adjournment of the morning meeting, the President of the International Olympic Committee will make a statement at an informal segment.

On Monday, 17 November 2003, in the morning, the General Assembly will take up agenda item 16 (a), "Election of forty-three members of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law".

The meeting rose at 6.50 p.m.



General Assembly

Fifty-eighth session

40th plenary meeting

Wednesday, 22 October 2003, 10 a.m.
New York

Official Records

President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte (Saint Lucia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. van den Berg (Netherlands), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 41 (continued)

Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/333)

Ms. Kang Kyung-wha (Republic of Korea): My delegation welcomes this opportunity to review the follow-up to the General Assembly's special session on children, which was held from 8 to 10 May last year. No issue is more relevant to the present and future well-being of our world than that of children. Indeed, "A world fit for children", as the outcome document of the special session is called, would be a world best fit for all. Progress towards the major goals identified in the document will be a major contribution to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The Republic of Korea is resolved to fully realizing those goals.

In the Republic of Korea the special session and the preparations leading up to it served to further consolidate the reorientation in policy-thinking on children. In the past, the focus had been on support for children in need. However, the revision of our child welfare act in 2000 marked a shift towards children's rights in general. The shift was further institutionalized with the formulation of the comprehensive plan for

child protection and rearing, which was published on 5 May 2002 — Children's Day — on the eve of the special session.

The comprehensive plan incorporates the elements of "A world fit for children" that are most pertinent to areas requiring further improvement in the Republic of Korea and is organized in a way that will most effectively build upon the achievements attained thus far. The plan covers 48 measures in five areas: enhancing children's rights; improving the health and welfare of children; strengthening children's safety; protecting children from harmful environments; and supporting the sound rearing of children. To oversee the implementation of the plan, the Committee for Child Protection and Rearing, which is composed of 13 vice-ministerial-level officials from the relevant ministries and offices, has been established to devise annual programmes for the implementation of the plan and to undertake regular reviews of achievements.

Among the 48 measures, of particular note for its cross-cutting implications for future policy-making is the development of the children's rights index. As called for in "A world fit for children" and further emphasized in the Bali Consensus — the outcome of the sixth East Asia and the Pacific Ministerial Consultation on Children — pertinent data is crucial to devising effective policies. My Government has therefore commissioned the Institute for Health and Social Affairs to develop a children's rights index. The existing system of data collection has lacked a unified categorization of age groups for children, and is

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therefore insufficient to cover all children and all areas under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The new index should lead to vast improvements in the collection of data pertaining to children. It will serve as the basis of a white paper on children's rights, to be published every five years, beginning in 2005.

Of the four major goal areas elaborated in "A world fit for children", I wish to focus on education, which was also identified in the Bali Consensus as an overarching imperative in fulfilling the commitments made with regard to children.

Education has always been given the highest priority in the Republic of Korea, and educated citizens have led the drive behind the country's economic development and democratic growth. The opportunities for children are already wide and still expanding. Currently, boys and girls are equally entitled to nine years of compulsory education. Most children advance to high school. There is little gender disparity in primary and secondary education. As of 2001, 67.6 per cent of girls and 73.1 per cent of boys advanced to college upon graduation from high school.

The Government's current focus is on achieving gender equality and eliminating gender discrimination in the content of education. A gender-equal curriculum for primary and secondary education has been worked out. Training programmes for teachers based on gender equality are also being strengthened. The Republic of Korea is fully committed to fostering gender equality in and through education, and will continue its efforts in that regard.

Furthermore, we believe that the empowerment of women is crucial in the promotion of the rights and well-being of children. Measures to empower women such as strengthened maternity protection and child care outside the home have a direct bearing on the healthy growth of children. The Ministry of Gender Equality, which was established in 2001, is therefore working closely with the Ministry of Public Health and Welfare and other relevant offices to devise policies that optimize the benefits to both women and children.

Another focus to improve the education sector is on children with disabilities. Measures in that area are an important part of the national programme for the promotion of the welfare of the disabled, which was established in 1998. Currently, the second phase of the programme, for the period 2003-2007, includes measures to provide quality education for disabled

children suitable for the knowledge-based information age, to expand model schools for inclusive education, to improve support centres for disabled children and to provide textbooks suited to the needs of children with visual impairments.

While promoting the goals of "A world fit for children" at home, the Republic of Korea has also been an active participant in regional and global initiatives on children. The Asia-Europe Meeting's (ASEM) Action on Child Welfare and the ASEM Initiative to Combat Trafficking in Women and Children are just some of the recent forums through which we have shared our experiences and policies with others on the pending issues related to children.

The official development aid programmes of the Republic of Korea have also incorporated projects for children in the East Asia and Pacific regions, including the construction of primary schools and hospitals, the promotion of children's health projects and the dispatch of medical specialists in paediatrics and obstetrics. We hope that those efforts will contribute to the enhancement of the well-being of children and to the achievement of the goals of "A world fit for children" in the region.

Finally, the Republic of Korea is fully behind the efforts made by the United Nations on behalf of children. In particular, we applaud UNICEF's dedication to helping the most vulnerable and needy children of the world, in collaboration with other United Nations bodies. We have supported its activities in the field with financial and material assistance. The successful outcome of the special session was in no small measure due to the dedication of UNICEF acting as its secretariat. Likewise, the successful implementation of "A world fit for children" calls for its continued active engagement in advocacy, humanitarian intervention and development assistance on behalf of children. In collaboration with other agencies of the United Nations and as a complement and support to the efforts of Member States, that engagement would provide the building blocks for the construction of a world fit for children.

Mr. Buffa (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation aligns itself with the statement made yesterday by the delegation of Peru on behalf of the countries of the Rio Group.

The Government of the Republic of Paraguay attaches priority to promoting and protecting the

fundamental rights of children and adolescents, particularly in conjunction with the set of objectives and targets agreed at the May 2002 special session of the General Assembly on children. The outcome document of the session, "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex), reaffirmed the international community's commitment to implementing the remaining programmes and tasks of the 1990 World Summit for Children.

We should note that the special session was the first time that delegations comprised children and adolescents as official members, more than 400 of whom participated from more than 150 countries. The objectives and targets specifically established in four priority spheres of action — promoting a healthy life; access to quality education; the need to protect children and adolescents from maltreatment, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS — sought to strengthen and provide new impetus to countries' commitments to attaining the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 through the definition of essential and concrete intermediate goals for 2010.

We should also seek to integrate international objectives into national Government plans and policies. In that connection, we have agreed to formulate or strengthen, by the end of 2003, national and regional plans of action designed for children with the participation of civil society, including non-governmental organizations and children and adolescents, whose opinions should be taken into account in all matters that affect them.

In that context, I wish to take this opportunity to announce that Paraguay recently drafted and adopted the national plan for children and adolescents, a five-year short-term plan for 2003 to 2008, consistent with the national childhood and adolescence policy formulated for a 10-year period, 2003 to 2013, which has greater and longer-term objectives aimed at comprehensive and substantive development of this majority sector of society, which represents approximately 47 per cent of Paraguay's population.

Since the World Summit for Children, important progress has been made in Paraguay with regard to the system for protecting and promoting the rights of children and adolescents. In that connection, the childhood and adolescence code is the chief regulatory framework protecting children's rights. It imposes a doctrine of comprehensive protection and incorporates

the principle of the best interests of the child, in keeping with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In the same way, Paraguay has ratified the principal instruments of the inter-American and global systems for protecting and promoting children's rights, including very recently the second Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Likewise, the national secretariat of childhood and adolescence is promoting measures aimed at early ratification of International Labour Organization Convention 138, concerning the minimum age for admission to employment, which has already been endorsed by the Paraguayan Congress and is currently before the Chamber of Deputies.

In this field, there are favourable signs in Paraguay. On the one hand, decentralized efforts and mechanisms for protection, promotion and development of all children and adolescents have passed their experimental stage and are now being permanently financed and assessed. I am referring to the municipal childhood councils, which aim to protect children's best interests and to implement public policies at the local governmental level throughout the national territory with the central administration's decentralized agencies, civil society organizations and community organizations for children and adolescents. A concrete example of that is the commitment to implement a programme to provide a glass of milk to every child attending primary school. Currently, there is renewed effort in the central department responsible for that programme, whose outreach is expected to be 300,000 children.

However, much remains to be done. In that connection, we cannot fail to mention our great concern about the number of children and adolescents who still live on the streets in an urgent situation without access to a minimum education and who are subject to all kinds of abuses and excesses. We are also concerned about the high rates of school dropouts due to premature admission to employment and to the pregnancies of school-age girls.

In the area of education, I should like to reaffirm Paraguay's firm commitment to strengthening educational reform, which not only aspires to tailor the comprehensive training of children and adolescents to current needs and challenges, but also seeks to

optimize the educational system's scarce resources. Therefore, mindful that education and comprehensive training of children and adolescents are essential for development and the enjoyment of human dignity, the Government of Paraguay proposes to increase its social capital through innovative strategies that will reverse the perverse cycle of poverty.

Mr. Chaimongkol (Thailand): My delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for his report on follow-up to the United Nations special session on children (A/58/333), held in May 2002. We are pleased to learn that one year has passed with a good start in the implementation of the Plan of Action contained in the outcome document, entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex), adopted at the special session. Thailand reaffirms its commitment to pursuing the four goal areas of the Plan of Action: promoting healthy lives; providing quality education; protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS.

Thailand attaches high priority to protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence. The Thai Government has striven to prevent and suppress all forms of exploitation of children, particularly trafficking in children. Apart from strengthening legislative measures, the national policy and plan of action to prevent and suppress trafficking in women and children was adopted with an integrated and comprehensive approach to addressing the problem, particularly its root causes. Moreover, special attention has been devoted to girls' education. Education, both formal and non-formal, and vocational training have been provided to girls with a view to empowering them.

It is to be noted that a consistent spirit of partnership among governmental and non-governmental sectors, including the private sector, non-governmental organizations and civil society, has been forged to ensure that every effort is made to promote and protect children in Thailand.

As international cooperation is required in the prevention and eradication of trafficking in children, Thailand has developed close cooperation with the United Nations system and the Governments of countries in the Greater Mekong subregion — namely Cambodia, China, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar — to step up cooperation in combating trafficking in women and children in the

region. At a bilateral level, Thailand also concluded, in May 2003, an agreement with Cambodia on the suppression of trafficking in women and children and on assistance to trafficked victims.

As mentioned in the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Thailand is pleased to facilitate conflict resolution by providing a venue for peace talks by the conflicting parties. We are particularly delighted that the recent peace talks in Thailand have resulted in the reaffirmation of the commitments undertaken by the parties concerned to refrain from using children under 18 years of age in combat and from recruiting those under 17.

My delegation wishes to underline the importance of the universal nature of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which now has 192 State parties. We also welcome the increasing number of countries that have acceded to its optional protocols. As a party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child since 1992, Thailand welcomes the enlargement of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, which will further strengthen the capacity of the Committee to fulfil more effectively its mandate.

In this connection, my delegation shares concerns about the increasingly heavy workload and the backlog problem faced by the Committee, which are currently affecting the Committee's effectiveness in addressing global concerns on children-related issues. We therefore wish to support the efforts of the Committee to improve its methods of work and its management in order to better deal with the challenges facing it. We should not forget that the effectiveness of the Committee is vital to achieving "A world fit for children".

Mr. Dhakal (Nepal): At the outset, I wish to join previous speakers in expressing my delegation's sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report (A/58/333) on the follow-up to the United Nations special session on children.

My delegation also wishes to express its appreciation to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict for his analytical report on the protection of children affected by armed conflict (A/58/328).

Humanity is on a perennial quest for peace, prosperity and justice for all. Children must be at

centre stage of that quest, as they are the future of our societies. For them to become educated, healthy and productive citizens, they must have the right to proper education, adequate health facilities, and a conducive economic and social environment.

Today millions of children are victims of poverty, illiteracy, disease and armed conflict across the world. Eleven million children still die every year, mostly of preventable or curable diseases. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has been taking its toll on millions of innocent children as well. Atrocities and brutality against children continue unabated in conflict areas.

This, indeed, must change. We have a set of global blueprints for action in place. The Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out broad parameters for a better environment for children. The Millennium Development Goals and the Declaration on "A world fit for children" identify steps to change the world for and with children in a time-bound manner. The Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation reinforce these and other goals.

We need to pool our resources and energies to implement those blueprints in order to protect the rights of children and to uplift their status in society. The multidimensional nature of children's problems requires that we make coherent and concerted efforts at the national, regional and international levels. Nepal expresses its appreciation to the United Nations for its endeavours to build a common platform for action and to bring about much-needed coherence and cooperation.

The task before us is formidable. The goals of reducing poverty by half and of providing all children with primary education by the year 2015, as well as other global agreed goals, are laudable, appropriate and, indeed, ambitious. Business as usual will not get us where we want to go. We must muster greater political will in order to accomplish our task and redouble our efforts to achieve those goals.

Nepal is fully committed to protecting the rights of children and to promoting their development. We have become party to a number of international and regional human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions No. 138, on Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, and No. 182, on the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Nepal has already signed the two

Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We have also submitted our combined second and third periodic reports, as stipulated by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

To translate those commitments into improved status for children, Nepal has taken a number of legislative, policy and administrative measures. The 1990 Constitution of the Kingdom of Nepal guarantees the protection of the rights and interests of children and prohibits trafficking in human beings, slavery, serfdom or forced labour.

The Children's Act of 1992 spells out the rights of children in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and prescribes measures to safeguard them. The Child Labour — Prohibition and Control — Act of 1999 prohibits the employment of children under the age of 16. There are also several provisions in the civil code to protect the interests of children.

A strategic action plan has been formulated to address problems in seven key sectors, including child bonded labour; child rag pickers; child porters; child domestic workers; children in mines; children in the carpet sector; and trafficking in girls and sexual or labour exploitation. There is a special focus on promoting a healthy life; providing quality education; protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence; and combating HIV/AIDS.

A master plan has been prepared to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2007 and all forms of child labour by 2010. The overriding objective of the current tenth five-year plan is to reduce poverty through interventions in the education, health, sanitation and rural development sectors. The plan aims to raise the literacy rate to 63 per cent and to increase school enrolment substantially. Free primary education for all, free textbooks for girl students at that level, as well as scholarships for Dalit and disadvantaged children, are some of the key features of our strategy that have been in the process of implementation in the education sector for some time now.

An integrated health service that provides primary health care, family planning services and immunization was introduced in our country some time ago. Immunization has reached more than 90 per cent of our country's children. Emphasis has been placed on providing safe drinking water and sanitation facilities.

Those programmes are integral to our efforts to alleviate poverty and improve overall condition of children. As part of our overall strategy, a comprehensive national plan of action on children is also being implemented, with the assistance of UNICEF and other United Nations agencies.

To implement those programmes, Nepal established a Ministry of Women, Children and Social Welfare and other necessary institutional frameworks. The Human Rights Commission, the Women's Commission and juvenile benches in district courts have been set up to protect children's rights. A high-level central child-welfare board and district child-welfare boards have been set up in all 75 districts to promote the rights of the child and to mobilize local communities and resources to address problems faced by children at the district level.

His Majesty's Government has been working in close cooperation with all stakeholders at home and abroad to make possible the implementation of various development programmes aimed at children. It has sought the full participation of non-governmental organizations and the private sector in those activities.

At the regional level, we signed the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Convention on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Women and Children for Prostitution and the SAARC Convention on Regional Arrangements for the Promotion of Child Welfare in South Asia at the Eleventh Summit of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation, which was held in Kathmandu in January 2002. The Conventions will complement global and national efforts to create a world fit for children.

Despite those efforts, poverty persists and children continue to suffer in Nepal. The Maoist insurgency has further worsened the situation. The Maoists have been disrupting much-needed development activities, destroying infrastructure and recruiting children as child soldiers. Nepal, a least developed country, needs peace to be able to implement the various programmes and activities aimed at the protection of children's rights and the promotion of development. The Government has been seeking to resolve the Maoist problem through dialogue, while at the same time taking measures to protect lives and property from Maoist brutalities and

to safeguard liberty and freedom from the insurgents' ambition to destroy democracy.

Nepal needs additional financial and technical cooperation from its development partners to implement various policies and programmes and to improve the situation of children. Assistance is also critical for quick-impact projects in the Maoist-affected areas to provide basic services to people. A recently published report, which was also presented at the Joint Executive Board meeting of UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), showed that our resources and the present level of external assistance will be far from sufficient to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

In conclusion, as parents and elders it is our obligation to provide children with the basic necessities of life and with the opportunity for quality education, health services and a loving and caring environment. We must not allow the momentum generated by the various conferences on those topics to falter.

Mrs. Ahmed (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is clear that the rights of the child have been at centre stage since the holding of the World Summit for Children in 1990. Those rights are now a priority of Governments, civil society organizations, scientists and researchers who seek to foster the capabilities of children and meet their basic needs within a family providing safety, well-being, education, morals and ethics for a better future. Interest in the agenda for children has increased since the adoption and implementation of the Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children", which will contribute to the well-being of children and to strengthening their rights.

International cooperation has a very important role to play in that regard, especially in connection with providing support to developing countries as part of the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and as a practical and positive approach aimed at overcoming obstacles and meeting agreed international financial commitments. There is, therefore, a need to enhance the implementation of the Plan of Action and to reinvigorate political will at the national and international levels.

If the present international situation continues, we shall see a widening of the gap between the rich and the poor in every country. Poor countries will therefore not be able to benefit from the positive aspects of globalization, which will then lead to further

marginalization of developing countries, and in particular the least developed countries. At the same time that those countries are experiencing the effects of malnutrition, malaria and HIV/AIDS — especially the ones located in Africa — they must also contend with the burden imposed by foreign debts and the servicing of those debts.

My delegation made a statement to the Third Committee concerning the national efforts Sudan is making with regard to protecting the rights of children and promoting their well-being. In this connection, we would like to express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report (A/58/333) on the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children. We wish to underscore the contents of that report pertaining to the follow-up to major international conferences and other important summits that provided a comprehensive plan of action for development, whose primary objective is the elimination of poverty.

The report of the Secretary-General also referred to cooperation between the African Union, the Economic Commission for Africa and UNICEF in drafting a comprehensive report on the situation of children in Africa. My delegation believes that that report should serve to raise awareness of the situation of children in Africa, given that they represent the most affected and vulnerable segment of the population by virtue of their exposure to such endemic diseases as malaria and HIV/AIDS and the fact that their mortality rate is extremely high owing to malnutrition and armed conflict. My delegation therefore believes that all factors affecting the lives, rights and prosperity of African children must be taken into account in the preparation of the report.

The report of the Secretary-General also addressed the issue of follow-up by some regional organizations. A comprehensive resolution in line with the outcome document of the General Assembly's special session on children and entitled "An Arab world fit for children" was adopted at the Arab Summit held in March 2002. The May 2002 meeting of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) also adopted a resolution on child care and protection in the Islamic world. That resolution refers to the Plan of Action as a reference for action by OIC members.

My delegation would like for the Secretary-General's future reports on follow-up to include a comprehensive analytical review of the implementation

of the Plan of Action at the national, regional and international levels by focusing on the four primary goals with a view to defining problems and challenges and making practical recommendations. My delegation attaches special importance to the study being prepared by the Secretary-General on violence against children, in keeping with the relevant resolution of the General Assembly. My delegation hopes that it will be inclusive of all the fundamental causes that lead to violence against children, and in particular of the spread of poverty and disease. The report should also deal with the commercial and sexual exploitation of children through prostitution and their suffering under armed conflicts, abuse, killing and displacement, to which they are subject as a result of foreign occupation.

Finally, my delegation wishes to express its appreciation for the efforts of the Secretary-General and the United Nations specialized agencies, particularly the United Nations Children's Fund, aimed at achieving the well-being of children and enhancing their rights, while, at the same time, implementing the recommendations of the report, "A world fit for children", and supporting national efforts to follow up implementation of the plan of action of that document. We also appreciate all the relevant initiatives of non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations.

Mr. Kovind (India): We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (A/58/333). We have perused this report with interest.

We understand that the first in-depth report of the Secretary-General on this subject will be provided only in 2006. This is understandable, as progress, or the lack of it, can only be reviewed after sufficient time has been allowed for action to be taken. The General Assembly, nevertheless, in its resolution 57/190 requested a report this year with a view to identifying problems and constraints in achieving progress. Such a report can enable Member States to focus on areas in which reinforced commitment may be required.

The special session on children, held in 2001, had recognized that the resources promised at the 1990 World Summit for Children had, in fact, not been provided. The Plan of Action adopted by that session therefore devoted a separate chapter to the mobilization of resources. That was based on the realization that implementation would not be possible without

additional allocation of resources, both in the national and the international contexts. Developed countries undertook a number of commitments with regard to official development assistance, bilateral official debt and market access in the Plan of Action adopted by the special session.

The report of the Secretary-General does not refer to any specific constraints or problems that have been identified with regard to the commitments undertaken at the special session. The report contains a passing exhortation to all countries to follow up on the Monterrey Consensus to increase financing for development. There is, apart from this, no analysis of whether movement in the last year and a half has been in the right direction or not. Such an analysis could have helped us in our understanding of possible problems and constraints. There are a number of studies that establish the incremental growth acceleration that takes place with simple investments in the health, nutrition and education of infants and children. A study conducted in India has shown that one dollar invested in a child saves 27 dollars in future health care, medical treatment, subsidies and lack of economic contribution. It is very right, we believe, that poverty alleviation must begin with children. To invest in children is to invest in the future.

India has the largest child population in the world. We are aware of the gigantic dimension of that challenge. Our achievements, vis-à-vis all indicators for children over the past decade, have been positive. For example, the infant mortality rate declined from 146 per 1,000 live births in 1960 to 70 in 2000. The prevalence of severe and moderate degrees of malnutrition among children has steadily declined from 1974 to 2000. Primary school enrolment rates increased from 38 per cent in 1951 to 80 per cent in 2000. The availability of safe drinking water improved significantly, from 68 per cent in 1990 to 78 per cent in 2000. We realize that we still have a long road ahead, and we are committed to ensuring the rights, protection and complete development of every child in our country.

We are attempting to provide maximum outreach for our programmes for children. The integrated child development services, the largest child-care programme in the world, provide early child-care services to over 30 million children from 0 to 6 years from low-income groups. With the further scaling up of these services and a strong focus on newborn health

and survival, including through home-based neo-natal care by community workers and better health facilities, we hope to further improve the health status of our children.

The spectre of HIV/AIDS threatens the fabric of society, and children often become unwitting victims of tragedy. The national policy for prevention and control of HIV/AIDS, announced by the Government of India last year, reaffirms our commitment to provide an enabling social environment to prevention, care, support and protection of victims and to provide information and health education.

The problems of persisting malnutrition and high infant and maternal mortality rates have been receiving our attention. We have launched a national nutrition mission that provides, inter alia, additional nutritional supplements to adolescent girls and expectant and nursing mothers. Our strategy to eradicate malnutrition will follow the intergenerational approach, while building community awareness about healthy nutrition and educating mothers regarding proper health and nutritional care of their families. With those measures and with continued emphasis on improving the quality of water and access to sanitation, we hope to make an appreciable dent in the problem.

Our Government launched a universal elementary education scheme three years ago. Through it, we intend to provide free and quality education for all children in the age group of 6 to 14 years by 2010, with special emphasis given to girls' education. This is a significant step toward achieving the goal of universalizing elementary education through a time-bound integrated approach. Our Department of Women and Child Development released a detailed statistical profile of Indian children last year. It contains a rich compilation of data for all the states in the country. The data have been disaggregated by gender and by the rural versus urban dimension. This is the beginning of the creation of a national and State database for children. Such a database would assist our policy makers and programme managers in devising more focused interventions and in guiding us towards the goals that we have established.

Ms. Kangaloo (Trinidad and Tobago): The delegation of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report, contained in document A/58/333 and entitled "Follow-up to the United Nations special session on

children". In his report, the Secretary-General has sought to identify the extent to which progress has been made by Governments in developing and/or strengthening national action plans for children as a critical first step towards the implementation of the commitments made 18 months ago at the special session.

In this regard, my delegation would like to inform the Assembly that Trinidad and Tobago's national plan of action is well advanced and is expected to be completed and approved by the Cabinet in 2004. This national plan of action, which is being drawn up after the holding of regional public consultations to incorporate the views of civil society and other organizations, will identify concrete strategies for the development of children.

In addition to the preparation of a national plan of action, other activities and policy initiatives have been initiated or are fully under way in several areas, all of which are aimed at according full respect for and protection of children's rights in Trinidad and Tobago.

Trinidad and Tobago's broad policy with respect to children envisages, *inter alia*, the following: providing quality education at the primary, secondary, vocational and tertiary levels starting from early childhood, ensuring access to training with a view to promoting sustainable employment; promoting the protection of children's rights; fostering youth leadership and participation in community activities and national decision-making; and increasing awareness of health issues such as HIV/AIDS.

Since the adoption of the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children at the World Summit for Children, held in 1990, to which Trinidad and Tobago fully subscribes, and in the context of our subsequent adherence to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, various civil society organizations in Trinidad and Tobago have been striving individually and collectively to formulate, introduce and implement measures in keeping with the aforementioned international policy instruments, to protect and develop the children of Trinidad and Tobago and to promote their best interests.

For its part, Government has provided a facilitative environment and has sought to foster collaboration at all levels of society to take into consideration the relevant input of all stakeholders.

Charged as I am with the portfolio of social services delivery in the Office of the Prime Minister, I wish to share with the international community some information on the activities that we have undertaken, aimed at reaffirming and promoting the rights of children.

Since 1997, we in Trinidad and Tobago have been annually observing Child Rights Week in the month of November, with the intention of disseminating information on the rights of the child to a wide cross-section of target groups such as Government ministries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), teachers, parents, the general public and, most important of all, the children of Trinidad and Tobago.

We have also been engaged in regular and ongoing sensitization and education programmes aimed at various publics. Information packages have been distributed to schools and to community-based organizations throughout Trinidad and Tobago, containing, among other things, a summary of the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Essay writing on this issue, community meetings and television and radio appearances have all focused on discussions on the rights and responsibilities of the child. Articles relating to proper parenting and child rearing are featured on a weekly basis in the print media with national circulation.

In July of this year, Trinidad and Tobago submitted its second periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in accordance with the Convention and taking fully into account the Committee's concluding observations of its consideration of Trinidad and Tobago's initial report of October 1997.

In November of last year, as part of my Government's annual observance of Poverty Eradication Week, focus was placed on children in recognition of the destructive impact that poverty has on their daily lives as well as on their future. The exploration of the theme "Breaking the cycle of poverty through early childhood care, nutrition and the environment" enabled the national community to understand what we — as adults, as a Government, as civil society and as a community — need to do to ensure that we break the cycle of poverty as it affects children in particular.

To conclude, the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago continues to work towards

achieving the four major goals identified in the Declaration and Plan of Action entitled "A world fit for children" (resolution S-27/2, annex). This year's national budget for the fiscal year ending in September 2004 allocates the highest percentage of resources to the health and education sectors and, in the area of combating HIV/AIDS, the Government will, starting in fiscal year 2003 and continuing for the next five years, spend approximately \$80 million on all aspects of the campaign against HIV/AIDS, which will target, among others, HIV-positive children. The Government will also be expanding access to antiretroviral therapy by establishing treatment centres throughout the country and by extending the coverage of our programme for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission.

In the area of providing quality education and in keeping with the Government's holistic approach to education, a plan to achieve universal pre-school education before the end of this decade has been developed.

As regards protecting children against abuse, exploitation and violence, my Government will be establishing no later than 2004 a fully functional children's authority for championing the rights of children.

The Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to ensuring the protection and well-being of our nation's children, and we will do our utmost to ensure that our children not only survive but blossom into healthy, wholesome young adults capable of playing a meaningful role in the ongoing development of Trinidad and Tobago.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker on the debate on this item. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 41.

Agenda item 46

Towards global partnerships

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/227)

Mr. Stachelin (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland fully subscribes to the principle of States' primary responsibilities to eradicate poverty, to respect all human rights, to protect the environment and to promote social and sustainable development. There is, in fact, little doubt regarding the central role of States,

particularly in drafting national and international policy. However, in the current climate of economic and social globalization, there is even less doubt that the requirements for global governance extend beyond the sphere of Governments' jurisdiction and authority.

A solid consensus on the current state of affairs is increasing among a growing number of countries in the North as well as in the South. In this regard, many recent initiatives support the need to develop and affirm a new culture of collaboration, relying on all of society's available resources.

In 2001, this Assembly unanimously recognized for the first time, by its resolution 56/76, the soundness of global partnerships. It reminded us that action taken to meet the challenges of globalization could only benefit from a strengthening of the cooperation between the United Nations and all concerned partners, in particular the private sector, so that globalization could become a force that is beneficial for all.

Despite this encouraging development, what was once the millennium consensus is now waning, to the point of being called into question. Switzerland is convinced that partnerships are one useful tool for maintaining this process, or even of re-energizing it.

This commitment was notably manifested at the major conferences — from Monterrey to Cancún, by way of Johannesburg — even though their outcomes did not necessarily meet expectations. Without bringing these results into question, we must persevere; our hope is based on the fact that the many partnerships developed at these intergovernmental meetings often produce tangible and promising results in the future.

Drafted two years ago, the Secretary-General's first report on "Cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector" (A/56/323) is now the document of reference. It presented existing forms of cooperation between the United Nations and the private sector, identified outstanding issues and proposed recommendations in that regard. Switzerland supported those pertinent recommendations then and continues to do so.

Action was taken on the report's recommendations, as shown by the latest report on the strengthening of cooperation between the United Nations and relevant partners (A/58/227). Moreover, we thank the Secretary-General for this excellent

document, which presents an exhaustive overview of recent developments. It highlights, in particular, that all partnerships initiated within the United Nations context must respect a certain number of simple and effective rules: first, they must fully preserve the integrity, impartiality, and independence of the United Nations; secondly, they must function in as transparent a manner as possible; finally, they must contribute to the achievement of the Organization's goals.

In our view, these rules are essential, and in this regard we have taken a great interest in the review currently under way of the guidelines governing the Organization's relations with the private sector. We hope that this review will be completed as early as possible.

The report also highlights the fact that, today more than ever, we need a new culture of cooperation. In this regard, Switzerland is particularly interested in the development of policy dialogues with the private sector, as well as in efforts to promote United Nations objectives and sensitize non-State actors to them.

In the same spirit, Switzerland supports with conviction the Global Compact launched by the Secretary-General. In three years, this innovative initiative has proven that it is possible to bring together businesses, the United Nations and its agencies, civil society, and Governments in the search for common and freely agreed solutions. Of course, a watchful and constructive eye must be trained upon the subscribing activities and businesses, in order to ensure that the initiative is not reduced merely to public relations. The founding principles of the Global Compact must therefore remain the transparency and responsibility of all actors involved. At the same time, however, the Global Compact is in itself an experiment, requiring flexibility and sufficient political space to manoeuvre to maximum effectiveness.

It could be said that the Global Compact has reached the end of its experimental phase, and is now maturing into its operational phase. Institutional developments, improved transparency, and the permanent debate revolving around the initiative give us confidence for its future.

Mr. Stanislavov (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): The implementation of the goals set out in the Millennium Declaration by the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development requires

joint efforts and enhanced partnership cooperation among States, international organizations, the private sector and other segments of civil society. The experience of recent years has confirmed that the main focus of the efforts of these partners should be the fight against poverty and assistance to economic growth and sustainable development. The United Nations has shown itself to be the most appropriate platform for developing such partnerships, enabling flexible coordination of the work of their stakeholders, the balance of their interests, transparency, accountability and conformity with United Nations objectives.

General Assembly resolutions 55/215 and 56/76, "Towards global partnerships", co-sponsored by Russia, set out the proper parameters for interaction between the United Nations and non-State entities, particularly enterprises, foundations and other actors of the private sector. Further broadening the business relations of the Organization with the private sector deserves all possible support and encouragement. That is the imperative of our times. The globalization of the world economy has made business one of the leading factors of development and one of the most important participants in global economic ties. More than that, it is obvious that the prospect of full achievement of the Monterrey and Johannesburg targets depends on the productive participation of the private sector and other partners.

On the whole, Russia is satisfied with United Nations efforts to establish multilateral partnerships. As one of the most successful examples of such efforts, we would like to mention the useful work of the United Nations Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force. In this area, we particularly take note of the achievements resulting from the World Summit on Sustainable Development and the important catalytic role played by the Commission on Sustainable Development. We believe that there is a need to make more active use here of the Monterrey track as well. On the whole, the United Nations system needs to expand the practice of partnerships, especially in the area of development assistance. It is also important that partners have an opportunity to exchange experience with each other.

From the outset, Russia has supported the initiative of Secretary-General Kofi Annan on the Global Compact, aimed at the active cooperation of the business community with the United Nations with a view to creating a global economy with a human face.

It is no secret that in certain places there are still apprehensions that the involvement of the business sector in cooperative work with the United Nations in the area of development might undermine the entire governmental basis of such cooperation. We do not share such apprehensions, and in our view the developments of recent years in fact convincingly confirm this rationale.

The experience of the United Nations allows us to draw some conclusions. We share the view of the Secretary-General, stated in his report under this agenda item (A/58/227), that there is no single model for successful partnerships and that partnerships are flexible in nature. However, it is obvious that any innovations in the strategic framework and in the practical implementation of partnerships must in the final analysis both meet the interests of the Governments of Member States and work to strengthen the authority and preserve the independence of the Organization. We expect that that basic approach will be fully taken into account when carrying out the updating of the United Nations business guidelines promised in the Secretary-General's report.

Russia is interested in developing cooperation between the United Nations and the Russian business community, particularly through the Global Compact. The idea of the Compact has become increasingly well known in Russia as a result of a successful round table on Russian business and the United Nations, held at the end of 2001 in Moscow. Currently, 11 leading Russian companies have adhered to the Global Compact, and a national coordination committee for the Global Compact, made up of representatives from private companies and corporations, has been established. The positive trends in the Russian economy and the attendant increase in foreign investment activity are, in our view, creating additional opportunities for the wider dissemination of the principles of corporate governance and international standards of management, accounting, auditing and environmentally sound production advanced by the Global Compact.

Mr. Kazemi Kamyab (Islamic Republic of Iran): Let me express first and foremost our deep appreciation for the President's active and engaged stewardship of the work of the General Assembly. I should also like to take this opportunity to register our appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for the timely reports prepared for this

year's session, including that on agenda item 46, "Towards global partnerships".

Recent developments at major United Nations conferences, such as the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, as well as the increasing engagement of the United Nations in partnerships — examples of which have been elaborated in the report of the Secretary-General — should indicate the importance of this subject to all of us in the Assembly, whether from developing or developed countries. Since we have had the opportunity in the past to present our general views on various aspects of global partnerships, I do not intend to repeat those positions and analyses, which are fully known to the Assembly. Instead, I wish to emphasize some elements and aspects which we consider to be prominent and urgent for our prospective work.

I should stress here that my Government attaches, as a matter of principle, great importance to the role and participation of stakeholders, including the private sector, in activities contributing to the realization of the goals and objectives of the United Nations. Based on this overall premise, we are well disposed and fully prepared to engage in a proactive and constructive dialogue with all interested negotiating partners on all aspects of this important subject.

We are of the firm view that partnerships, in all their aspects and at the national and global levels alike, should be conducive to development and the elimination of poverty. This cannot be overemphasized. What is at issue, therefore, is the role that the international community should play in this context. The question of building partnerships finds its place within this overall framework. Put in very practical terms, the question for us is how to strengthen the development role of the United Nations system, how to enhance the effectiveness of its development activities and its support for national development strategies and programmes by implementing various initiatives, including partnerships with all relevant partners and the private sector in particular. Needless to say, these initiatives should be thoroughly reviewed, discussed and refined by Member States.

In a world somewhat fixated on market economics and corporate profitability, legislation and intergovernmental agreements should remain important components of any strategy to promote corporate

responsibility and accountability. New initiatives in general, and partnerships in particular, should not lead to a further weakening of the regulatory role of the State and intergovernmental bodies. It is necessary to reiterate the importance of the State in providing for the general welfare of its citizens. We should recognize that fact and not undermine or diminish the role of the State. It is the State that is in charge of development, and not the market or corporations, as they have totally different agendas.

The cooperation between the United Nations and relevant partners should primarily aim at making a contribution to the realization of the goals and programmes of the Organization. Relevant partners, particularly the private sector, should contribute to the realization of the development goals of the Organization through the provision of financial resources, transfer of technology, management expertise, in-kind donations, responsible investments, and reductions in the price of drugs used to treat pandemic diseases. We hope in particular that the transnational corporations, which have great influence in the global economy, will join efforts to realize the development goals of the United Nations and take concrete measures to help developing countries in their efforts to promote development.

In our view, it is imperative that the United Nations and its related bodies should focus their work on issues central to the transfer of knowledge and technology and to the building of the necessary domestic capacities, with a view to promoting the competitiveness of the developing countries. We are very much concerned that the resources available to the United Nations system to assist developing countries in meeting the challenges they face in designing the policies and strategies required to bridge the technology gap between the North and the South are simply inadequate. In this context, the resources that the partners can contribute within the framework of partnership, in terms of expertise, funding and technology, should be a complement to, not a substitute for, governmental resources.

We take the view that in the context of cooperation with the relevant partners, the United Nations needs to follow a differentiated approach, in line with the characteristics of the partners as well as the fundamental purpose of contributing to the implementation of the development goals and programmes of the Organization.

With that in mind, and taking into account the lessons learned from successful partnerships, and also with due regard for the provisions of the relevant General Assembly resolutions on global partnerships, my country stands ready to contribute to collective intergovernmental endeavours to meet the challenges ahead, with a view to the further evolution of a common vision and the elaboration of realistic approaches to promoting partnerships among all stakeholders.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries — Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia — and the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, as well as the European Free Trade Association countries Iceland and Norway, align themselves with this statement.

At the outset, let me express, on behalf of the European Union, our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on "Enhanced cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector". The report is a useful update on the progress made and challenges encountered since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, which recognized the relevance of the participation of the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society to the collective achievement of the Organization's purposes.

The United Nations and the private sector have developed valuable and diverse initiatives. There are many forms of partnerships, ranging from time-bound project partnerships involving a small number of entities, to global initiatives involving various actors. The European Union is very pleased to acknowledge that today partnerships are an integral part of the work of many United Nations organizations, including funds and programmes, particularly those who have on-the-ground capacities to deliver.

The European Union has always considered partnerships to be important steps in the context of international cooperation for sustainable development. We believe that partnerships are supportive of, and complementary to, the intergovernmental processes and procedures of the United Nations and policy-making at the national level. The development process is an increasingly demanding task — all the more so given our growing awareness of our developing partners'

needs and priorities. To achieve the ambitious goals set out in the Millennium Declaration, we must seek new solutions and methods of work. This will be possible only with the active participation of all stakeholders in the development process — governmental and non-governmental alike.

The European Union takes a positive view of the various initiatives undertaken after the launching of the debate on global partnerships. There has been a flourishing of partnership initiatives, the best known of which are outlined in the Secretary-General's report. The International Conference on Financing for Development has further encouraged the establishment of partnerships. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development, 200 partnerships were announced. Partnerships are playing an important supportive role in carrying out the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, as recognized at the most recent session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

The United Nations Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Task Force is another valuable example of public-private-civil-society partnerships that make information and communication technologies available to all the world's citizens, in fulfilment of the Millennium Development Goals. We look forward to the next World Summit on the Information Society, as it will provide a unique opportunity to develop partnerships in this key sector. Furthermore, I wish to acknowledge the activities of the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships and to express our gratitude to the private companies and individuals that have contributed to the implementation of so many projects worldwide.

Global partnerships are not for multinational corporations alone. Experience to date has shown that both industrialized and developing countries are paying attention to the private sector. We would like the United Nations to expand its partnerships to include more initiatives by developing countries, if necessary through capacity-building projects.

The evolving debate on global corporate citizenship shows great vitality. Concepts such as accountability, transparency and corporate social responsibility should be taken into account and underlined. Governments have an important role in promoting this debate at the national and international levels. They also have an important role to play in

encouraging responsible global corporate citizenship, which should lead more companies to embrace the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) guidelines for multinationals and the Global Compact, and to become involved in partnerships in support of poverty reduction and sustainable development.

The United Nations Global Compact, launched by the Secretary-General in July 2000, is receiving tremendous support from the international community. The private sector has also come to recognize the need to balance financial and economic imperatives with broader societal concerns. The Global Compact contains a vision for good conduct based on nine principles, which more than 1,200 companies have now made part of their corporate strategy.

The European Union supports the work done by the Global Compact to integrate its principles into business activities through a range of initiatives, including dialogue, learning, outreach and projects. We believe that the Global Compact contributes positively to the achievement of development objectives, including the Millennium Development Goals.

The Secretary-General's report reflects the fact that partnerships are a very new phenomenon for the United Nations. They entail experimentation, as we are learning by doing. The United Nations can be instrumental in creating a favourable environment for the evolution of partnerships. The United Nations, together with main stakeholders like the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization, has, therefore, a particular role to play in further encouraging and enhancing the use of the instrument of partnerships in order to achieve the goals of the Organization.

The European Union understands concerns that the pursuit of profit and the promotion of private or individual advantage might take precedence over the public good. Partnerships must not compromise the independence of the United Nations or prevent it from defending the general interest and acting accordingly. The Secretariat has the responsibility to safeguard the integrity of the system, and we welcome the steps taken in that respect. At the same time, we believe that the growing partnership activities will require special training within the United Nations system to enhance the Organization's ability to manage them.

The European Union will introduce a draft resolution in the General Assembly that will reflect the positive developments in the global partnership activities of the United Nations, which we have outlined in this statement. We intend to build on the considerable support we received two years ago, and look forward to working with all interested delegations.

Ms. Jan (Pakistan): We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report, contained in document A/58/227, on cooperation between the United Nations and all relevant partners, in particular the private sector.

Our deliberation on this agenda item is rooted in the Millennium Declaration, which called for the development of strong partnerships with the private sector and with civil society organizations in pursuit of development and poverty eradication.

The International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development reaffirmed the commitment made at the Millennium Summit to forge a global partnership to address the complex and multidimensional challenges of poverty and underdevelopment.

The history of United Nations partnership with non-State actors dates back to 1946, when the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations of the Economic and Social Council was first established. Today, thousands of non-governmental and civil society organizations are working with the United Nations for the attainment of their shared objectives. With the help of those partners, United Nations agencies have achieved some major successes, especially in the areas of health, nutrition, poverty eradication and development.

In today's globalizing world, it is becoming increasingly evident that if we want globalization to work for all, as envisioned by our leadership in the Millennium Declaration, the economic, financial and social challenges confronting humankind will have to be addressed in a coherent and collective manner by all stakeholders. That will require greater cooperation between Member Governments of the United Nations and other non-State actors, such as the Bretton Wood institutions, civil society and the private sector, and the development of greater harmony in their shared endeavours to promote development. Based on that premise, Pakistan welcomes cooperation between the United Nations and other stakeholders and

acknowledges the positive role such partnerships can play in facilitating the flow of financial resources and technical know-how, including research and development, capacity-building and the sharing of experiences in various realms of development.

We believe that today's complex challenges can only be addressed through a collaborative and coherent approach involving the Member Governments of the United Nations, institutional stakeholders, the private sector and civil society. It was in that context that the Millennium Declaration resolved to provide greater opportunities for the private sector, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society to meaningfully contribute to the realization of the objectives and goals of the United Nations, particularly the Millennium Development Goals.

We also recognize the pivotal role that the private sector can play in achieving the development objectives of the major United Nations summits and conferences, particularly in the areas of trade, debt, investment, technology and industrial cooperation. Similarly, they can also make a positive contribution in the operational activities of the United Nations, especially as regards disadvantaged groups and the poorest segments of society.

In that regard, we are pleased to learn from the Secretary-General's report that a number of partnership initiatives between the United Nations and non-State actors are contributing immensely to the realization of the Organization's development goals. We appreciate the effort of United Nations funds, programmes and agencies to promote successful partnership with NGOs, civil society and other non-State actors. In that connection, we welcome the creation of a United Nations Partnerships Office in accordance with the provisions of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

We agree with the Secretary-General that partnerships are a tool to complement the Organization's efforts to achieve the goals and objectives of the United Nations. We also agree that, given the diversity of the areas in which the United Nations system works with its development partners, to evolve a uniform modality of interaction and rules of engagement is not possible. However, it is also not possible to work with non-State actors without defining the scope and limits of such cooperation. It is therefore important that partnership arrangements between the

United Nations system and the private sector should be based on clearly defined definitions, principles and criteria.

The principles and approaches for such partnerships should be built on the firm foundation of the purposes and principles set out in the Charter. The guidelines so prepared should clearly stipulate delineation of responsibilities and roles, accountability, transparency and commitment to maintaining the independence, integrity and impartiality of the United Nations. Furthermore, they should aim at serving the goals and purposes of the United Nations system and should respect the sovereignty and supremacy of States. In that regard, the set of principles for partnership arrangements prepared by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eleventh session could be used as a guideline by other entities of the United Nations system for preparing their own guidelines, taking into account their specific requirements.

Pakistan appreciates the role of non-State actors in the realization of the objectives of the United Nations and considers that those entities can play a vital role in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. They can also support developing countries in their efforts to eradicate poverty, by providing financial resources, technical expertise and transfer of technologies. However, it is important to ensure that the entities involved in partnership arrangements with the United Nations abide by the rules of procedure set by the Organization and assume corporate responsibility and accountability.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his detailed report on partnerships (A/58/227). It contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the state of cooperation between the United Nations and its partners in various areas over the past two years. The reach of economic globalization has broadened and deepened over recent years, but the gap between North and South continues to widen, and the disparity in development among countries has become more pronounced. At the same time, we are witnessing a considerable role being played in globalization by the private sector, particularly the massive transnational corporations.

In order to turn globalization into a positive force that benefits all and to promote common and balanced

development of countries in the process of globalization, each of the relevant partners, especially the private sector, should make its unique contribution by giving full play to its own advantages in financing and technology. In that context, we support the United Nations strengthening its cooperation with the relevant partners in order to encourage them to take part in activities aimed at attaining the Millennium Development Goals and implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences in the economic and social fields.

We have observed that the United Nations and its relevant partners have engaged in diverse forms of cooperation over the past two years. Many private sector and non-governmental organizations and civil society actors actively participated in the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and in carrying out specific projects in the field of development, playing a positive role towards achieving the goal of poverty eradication and other Millennium Development Goals. We appreciate their efforts in that regard.

At the same time, with a view to achieving better cooperation between the United Nations and relevant partners that takes full advantage of the strengths of those partners and optimizes their contribution to the work of the Organization, I would like to emphasize the following points.

First, cooperation with relevant partners should conform to the purposes and the principles of the Charter and to the rules and procedures of the United Nations, without detriment to the intergovernmental nature of the Organization. That is the basis for United Nations cooperation with its partners.

Secondly, partnerships should complement, but not be a substitute for, intergovernmental cooperation, and their overriding priority should be to contribute to achieving the Millennium Development Goals and implementing the outcomes of major United Nations conferences. At the same time, partnerships should be action-oriented. We agree with the observation of the Secretary-General in his report that "partnerships must prove their worth in a practical manner by the achievement of concrete results" (A/58/227, para. 66).

Thirdly, the Secretary-General also points out that "[there] is no single model for successful partnerships" (para. 64). We fully agree with him on that point and

believe that the United Nations should adopt diverse and flexible forms of cooperation with relevant partners, in keeping with the characteristics of those partners and the areas and levels of cooperation, and that this cooperation should contribute to achieving objectives.

Fourthly, partnerships need to be guided and regulated in order to ensure their quality. We support the proposal made by the Secretary-General in his report "to create more robust processes for partnership-reporting and accountability" (*para* 92). At the same time, we believe that the comprehensive and detailed guidelines and criteria on partnerships in the field of sustainable development formulated by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its eleventh session could serve as guidance for other partnerships within the United Nations system in the field of development.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): We thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/58/227). It is clear from the report that the United Nations has been active in building partnerships to achieve the goal of the eradication of poverty and other programmes of the Organization. Numerous examples of partnership projects have been undertaken, including on improving education, eliminating child labour, promoting youth issues, human rights, information technology and sustainable development. All of these contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and other commitments made at other major United Nations summits and conferences.

These partnerships are of particular importance to developing countries, which have tremendous problems mobilizing financial, technical and human resources to implement development and poverty eradication programmes. Partners, especially from the private sector, can come in to complement the efforts of Governments.

My own country, Uganda, has benefited in the specific areas of investment guidance and capacity-building, as well as in the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. Partnerships can help us, as a least developed country, in the area of infrastructure development and maintenance. We also need continued assistance in our joint effort to combat all forms of terrorism in our region.

We agree that such partnerships should in no way be a substitute for States' responsibility to be the lead

participants in their own development and in the fight for poverty eradication. It should also not be a substitute for the international community meeting its commitment to help developing countries eradicate poverty and achieve other agreed targets necessary for development.

We note that the cooperation between the United Nations and relevant non-State actors, especially the private sector, is necessary and mutually beneficial and has gained momentum in the recent past. We agree with the view that such partnerships should continue to serve the purposes and the principles of this, the most universal intergovernmental Organization, and should not compromise its intergovernmental decision-making nature.

Lastly, in its quest to deliver programmes to Member States, the United Nations should continue to assess the benefits and the risks associated with partnerships with non-State actors and to strengthen the guidelines for such cooperation.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 46.

Mr. Alimov (Tajikistan), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Agenda item 50

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/359)

Mr. Benmellouk (Morocco) (spoke in French): I should like to make the following comments on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The question before us today is indeed important, if not critical, given that the strengthening of multilateralism and the viability of international action for development depends, to a great extent, on the international community's capacity to translate into reality the commitments it undertook in the area of economic and social development at the various conferences and summits held during the past few years under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Group of 77 and China would recall that the commendable — and considerable — efforts of the international community have made it possible to achieve results dealing with the problem of development in all of its aspects that are accepted by all.

Indeed, with the commitments contained in the Millennium Declaration, as well as those emanating from the major conferences — in particular those held at Copenhagen, Monterrey and Johannesburg — the international community today has at its disposal a clear road map to guide our actions and channel our efforts towards the achievement of conditions conducive to sustainable and harmonious development, the equitable sharing of the benefits of globalization, and a peaceful world reconciled with itself.

However, the achievement of such a far-reaching yet viable objective requires unswerving efforts to fulfil the commitments to which I have just referred, taking into account the specific particularities of each process. It is within that framework that the Group of 77 and China launched the initiative for the establishment of an ad hoc working group to consider ways and means of ensuring the integrated and coordinated follow-up of the outcome of the major conferences and summit meetings held under the auspices of the United Nations in the economic and social spheres.

Today, in the context of the adoption of resolution 57/270 B, we welcome the outcome of the Group's work, in particular since the decision to convene, in 2005, a summit devoted to development and to involve the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in the annual meeting of the Economic and Social Council on financing for development represent, *inter alia*, considerable advances in the area of development.

Moreover, the broad consensus that emerged from the work of that working group is likely to strengthen the conviction of the international community as a whole regarding the vital need to revitalize the spirit of multilateralism and shared responsibility, given the irreversible process of globalization and the interdependence of economies.

In that context, the Group of 77 and China believes that, at a time when the developing countries are continuing to make tremendous efforts towards economic and social reform despite various and

overwhelming constraints, it devolves on developed countries to accompany those efforts by fulfilling their commitments in the area of development.

Indeed, based on the principles of solidarity, partnership and shared responsibility, which must guide the international community in its efforts to work for the welfare of all, the developed countries are more than ever before called on fully to contribute to those efforts through a variety of measures. Such measures include market access for products from the developing countries; a stepping up of official development assistance; a reduction in the external debt of developing countries and its cancellation for the least developed countries; the promotion of foreign direct investment for countries of the South; and contributions to the Global Fund to combat major pandemics.

The real threats of marginalization and poverty resulting from the galloping pace of globalization that face so many peoples of the South must further prompt the various elements of the international community — in particular the developed countries — immediately to act to realize a global partnership leading to development that benefits all and that will allow us to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Resolution 57/270 B, to which I referred earlier, has prepared the ground for a major event — a summit, to be held in 2005, to take stock of the implementation of commitments to achieve the Development Goals. The Group of 77, which spared no effort to achieve the adoption of that resolution, fervently hopes that the prospect of that global summit will provide an opportunity for all of us once again to give the issue of development top priority on the agenda of the United Nations. As everyone is aware, security questions are global and necessarily include the fight against poverty and destitution. Only hope for a better future can lead to greater stability and security for all.

We must take advantage of this debate to follow up on that resolution, decide on the modalities for the summit and begin preparations for its success. The summit, as provided for by the resolution, should be held within the framework of the integrated and coordinated follow-up of the outcome of the major conferences and summits of the United Nations in the economic and social fields, including the Millennium Declaration.

We believe that such a major event will provide a genuine opportunity to consider the implementation of commitments undertaken by Member States, both developed and developing, and to assess the progress made towards the achievement of the development goals agreed at the international level, including those set out in the Millennium Declaration. That meeting will also enable the international community to reflect on the best ways and means to move forward the implementation process.

Another question that is provided for in resolution 57/270 B deals with the assessment of follow-up mechanisms of the International Conference on Financing for Development. That resolution provides for an assessment during the fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly of the Monterrey Consensus follow-up mechanisms, namely the high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions and with the World Trade Organization (WTO), and the Assembly high-level dialogue on financing for development. The Group of 77 will be ready to begin that assessment immediately following the high-level dialogue on financing for development, set for 29 and 30 October.

Mr. Balarezo (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the countries of the Rio Group: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Uruguay, Venezuela, and my own country, Peru.

The Rio Group has decided to speak in this meeting of the General Assembly, in which we are discussing resolution 57/270B, adopted in June 2003, to reaffirm our firm commitment to fulfilling that resolution's objectives and to stress the importance of its full implementation.

We believe that the negotiating process that guided us to the resolution reflected the concern of us all that the progress made is not sufficient and that greater political impetus is therefore required to ensure the complete and effective fulfilment of the commitments we undertook in the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields.

Those conferences and summits, each with its own thematic unity, offered us an institutional, programmatic and conceptual framework for tackling

what we consider to be the major challenges to humanity: eradicating poverty and improving the living standards of the world's entire population. Nevertheless, the need for coordination among the various follow-up mechanisms and for determining the different roles of the various actors involved alerts us to the urgency of preparing a comprehensive framework giving coherence to the follow-up processes.

To tackle that challenge, we recognize, above all, that everyone must be involved in attaining those commitments. Therefore, it is necessary to coordinate and integrate the work of all actors involved in this process, such as States, the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization, civil society and the private sector.

In this regard, the Rio Group takes note of the proposal of the President of the Economic and Social Council to strengthen the role of the Council, which is acting on the requests for it to make its coordination activities more effective, in particular with respect to the work of the Commissions, the impact of the activities of the United Nations funds and programmes, and the Council's relationship with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. The Rio Group believes the proposal by the President of the Economic and Social Council is a valuable contribution deserving the study and discussion of Member States.

We emphasize the need to examine periodically the progress made towards achieving the agreed goals of the major United Nations conferences and summits. Such a review should respect the follow-up processes of each conference at all levels — national, regional, international and system-wide — and identify the obstacles that arise in the course of implementing decisions. Reviewing each follow-up process will also enable us to find the best ways to update their working methods and to enhance the synergies generated among the follow-up processes, with a view to achieving better results.

The Rio Group would like to stress the importance we attach to such a periodic review, which would provide us with an assessment of progress made, maintain the momentum necessary to consolidate that progress and enable us to design a set of measures for overcoming any obstacles encountered. In that regard, we support holding a summit in 2005 to assess

comprehensively the progress made. It should coincide with a comprehensive review of the implementation of the Millennium Declaration assessing progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, including goal 8: building a global partnership for development.

We also agree that we must determine the roles of and coordination among the various organisms and agencies of the United Nations system in the follow-up mechanisms for decisions adopted in order to enhance the effectiveness of measures taken at all levels and to strengthen the role of the United Nations.

In conclusion, we will continue this work in this session of the General Assembly when we consider the indicative programme of work of the Second Committee and when we evaluate the follow-up mechanisms established at the Monterrey Conference in accordance with Chapter III of the Monterrey Consensus. The Rio Group notes the suitability of continuing to explore ways and means of improving the work of the Second and Third Committees. The Rio Group will participate energetically in that work, which is part of the framework of the reform process under way at the United Nations and which aims to improve its action and effectiveness.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey, and the European Free Trade Association countries Liechtenstein and Norway align themselves with this statement.

The European Union supports a strong and efficient United Nations system and is ready to contribute actively to the goal of building an international order based on effective multilateral institutions within the fundamental framework of the United Nations Charter.

The principal goal of the years ahead will be the effective implementation of the commitments made at the major United Nations conferences and summits of the last ten years, including the Millennium Declaration, which for the European Union represents the overarching policy framework for United Nations economic and social work. The United Nations must play a central role in maintaining the political momentum established through the major conferences

and in ensuring a more integrated and coordinate implementation of their targets and commitments.

The positive outcome of the ad hoc working group of the General Assembly on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields culminated in the approval of resolution 57/270B. Its success is capitalizing on the momentum originating in the United Nations conferences and summits of the last decade has given fresh impetus to the work carried out by United Nations bodies. At this point, we have established a clear direction and a working programme that calls on the entire membership to make progress on these issues.

At the end of this month, the General Assembly will hold its first High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development. The European Union is committed to ensuring the successful outcome of that event. It will allow us to make an assessment of the follow-up to the mechanisms established in the Monterrey Consensus. The Monterrey Consensus has been successful because it is based on an innovative partnership among the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Those organizations have demonstrated a great commitment to implementing the Monterrey Consensus and have shown that it is possible to work together, within their respective mandates, to achieve a common objective.

What we have witnessed is just the beginning of a new era of cooperation and synergy in the international community's cohesive and effective action to implement a common agenda for the financing of development. We believe that there is room to improve this relationship further through the development and strengthening, in all the organizations involved, of a sense of ownership of the follow-up mechanisms of the Monterrey Consensus. We should continue to involve the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO in our discussions intended to determine the best ways to ensure that the follow-up mechanisms reflect the spirit of Monterrey and correspond to our common final objectives.

As far as the Second Committee is concerned, we are convinced that in order to maximize the policy relevance and the impact of the Committee's deliberations, we need to address the way it works. In particular, we are bound, according to resolution

57/270 B, to consider the Second Committee programme set forth in the annex to the resolution and take a decision thereon by December 2003. The European Union has already put forward its vision on how it feels the work should be reorganized. We approach this debate with an open mind but with the clear objective of strengthening the role of the United Nations.

General Assembly resolution 57/270 B also indicated the need to strengthen United Nations cohesiveness by fostering stronger interaction and coordination between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council through a process of greater consultation between the Presidents and the Bureaus of the Assembly and the Council. Furthermore, we need to ensure that the work of the General Assembly and its Second and Third Committees be more focused, coherent, visible and politically relevant to the implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits. In order to achieve this, we need to look at the interaction between the different Committees, guided by political vision.

The broad consensus on the pivotal role of the Economic and Social Council in system-wide coordination and in promoting integrated, coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits has been emphasized in the light of the policy guidance emanating from the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Consensus and the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. At its session last July, the Economic and Social Council decided to finalize the list of cross-referenced thematic issues and the multi-year work programme before its next substantive session, in 2004.

In its deliberations, the General Assembly has also invited the functional commissions of the United Nations Economic and Social Council to contribute actively to the assessment of cross-sectoral thematic issues. The various commissions have been asked to review their work methods, and we have great expectations for the results. The new path being taken by the Commission on Sustainable Development, for example, shows how innovation can lead to more targeted, productive work that keeps the United Nations in the focus of the initiatives and attention of Governments, civil society and other stakeholders. In this respect we believe that the functional commissions should look at resolution 57/270 B with a different

timetable. According to the report of the Secretary-General, it will take at least two years before we can have an understanding of what has been done. We believe that once there is consensus on proceeding in a certain direction, decisions have to be implemented rapidly and efficiently.

Achieving the Millennium Declaration Goals and the objectives of the other major United Nations conferences and summits will take sustained political attention, a strong sense of commitment and unwavering dedication at both the national and international levels. The European Union believes that the major event of 2005 will strengthen our common will to focus on implementation based on a comprehensive review of the progress achieved. As we have already indicated, we look to the Secretary-General to make further proposals to the Assembly next year on the structure of such an event. At the same time, we believe that the Secretariat should begin preparations, in order to provide the membership with a comprehensive evaluation on what has been achieved in terms of the results of the commitments undertaken by the international community in implementing the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

Mr. Qamar (Pakistan): It is with great pleasure that I address this august forum on the important subject of integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

At the outset, I wish to align our delegation with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Pakistan's delegation welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B on integrated and coordinated conference follow-up. We call for its immediate and full implementation.

Over the years, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council have played an important role by contributing to the evolution of the global economic and social normative framework that emerged from the major United Nations conferences and summits of the 1990s. It is now time to move from policy to implementation. To that end, we are happy that the focus of the decisions contained in resolution 57/270 B is on implementation.

We are pleased to note that the Economic and Social Council has been given the primary responsibility to act as the central forum for system-wide coordination and annual review and assessment of progress in the implementation of conference outcomes. Pakistan's delegation looks forward to participating in discussions to develop a multi-year work programme for the coordination segment of the Council, taking into account the thematic issues common to the conference outcomes as well as proposals by Member States. We believe that for the optimal results, the substantive review process must be carried out by the functional commissions. The work of the functional commissions should be analytical and must highlight key coordination issues relating to the theme of the coordination segment. As it is, the theme of the future high-level segment would be related to the theme of the coordination segment, which augers well for greater synergy and effective follow-up.

The monitoring of the implementation of the commitments should be across the board and based on indicators agreed upon through an intergovernmental process. While on this subject, may I emphasize the need to make the mechanisms for reporting by national Governments simplified and harmonized.

Of particular satisfaction to us is the emphasis placed by the General Assembly on the need for regular review of the progress made in the implementation of commitments undertaken in major United Nations conferences. The Assembly has also stressed the need for indicators to assess progress made in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, including the Goal concerning a global partnership for development.

In addition, we welcome the decision to hold a major United Nations event in 2005 aimed at a comprehensive review of progress achieved in implementing all commitments made in the Millennium Declaration. We fully endorse the points stressed by the representative of Morocco, speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, that such a review should be undertaken in a balanced manner in terms of the respective commitments of developed and developing countries. Indeed, a 2005 summit would be a welcome opportunity to undertake a global review of implementation of conference outcomes, including that of the Millennium Summit. We trust that the presidency of the General Assembly will initiate the preparatory process at an early date to ensure the

success of such a summit. We look forward to participating in deliberations on this important subject.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): At the outset, I should like to express our support for the statement made earlier by Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

Since the 1990s, the United Nations has held a series of major conferences and summits in the development field — such as the Millennium Summit, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development — with the aim of strengthening international development cooperation and achieving sustainable development and general social progress in all countries, particularly the developing countries. Those summits and conferences set out goals and targets for international development cooperation. Finding ways to integrate and coordinate implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits is essential in attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

We welcomed the fact that last year, the United Nations took an important step forward in its efforts to integrate and coordinate follow-up actions by forming an Ad Hoc Working Group within the General Assembly. In June this year, the General Assembly adopted resolution 57/270 B, on integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields, which established specific goals and focuses and which defined roles for the United Nations and related institutions. That marked a good starting point for comprehensive and balanced implementation of the outcomes of the relevant conferences and summits. In that context, we have taken note of the report submitted by the Secretary-General (A/58/359) on implementation of resolution 57/270 B. We appreciate the useful suggestions put forward by the Secretary-General.

I wish to make the following points on how to implement the resolution on follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

First, being action-oriented and placing priority on implementation are essential for integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits.

Development — particularly of developing countries — has been the common theme of all the major United Nations conferences and summits. At the same time, underdevelopment is the major obstacle to developing countries' efforts to implement those outcomes. The United Nations should commit itself to the development goals, principles and consensuses established by those conferences and summits; fundamentally change the trend towards making peace primary and development secondary; attach equal importance to promoting development and maintaining peace; establish a development culture; strengthen development agencies; and ensure development resources. To that end, we believe that the United Nations, in formulating cross-sectoral themes, should take fully into account the concerns of developing countries — such as financial assistance, technology transfer, capacity-building, market access and poverty eradication — so that development goals can be effectively addressed and attained in a comprehensive, concerted and balanced way.

Secondly, strengthening coordination and cooperation between the United Nations and relevant agencies and promoting the coherence and coordination of international development policies will guarantee implementation of the resolution. In implementing international development goals and targets, the United Nations and other development institutions — such as the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the relevant funds and programmes — all have important but different roles to play. The United Nations and those institutions need to strengthen the coherence and coordination of their policies to better link development policies and projects and to enhance the coherence and coordination of international development policies. We thus appreciate the regular dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO in the General Assembly and in the Economic and Social Council.

Thirdly, more comprehensive reform of the Economic and Social Council will lay the foundation for more meaningful development cooperation. In order to better integrate and coordinate United Nations efforts in that regard, resolution 57/207 B has provided the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and their functional bodies with a number of reform measures, such as reviewing follow-up mechanisms for development financing, streamlining the Second Committee's agenda, holding joint

meetings of the Second and Third Committees and improving the functional commissions' working methods. Reform leads to efficiency, effectiveness and responsiveness.

We welcome and support the proposals concerning United Nations reform in the economic and social fields. Here, I wish to emphasize two points. First, reform of the Second Committee and reform in the economic and social fields are integral parts of the entire United Nations reform process. Coordinated and comprehensive consideration should be given to various reform measures in their entirety. Secondly, the ultimate goal of reform is strengthening, not weakening, the economic development function of the United Nations; strengthening governmental responsibility rather than replacing it with partnership; expanding, not diminishing, the right of developing countries to participate in decision-making; and enabling civil society to join in international cooperation according to relevant rules of procedure, rather than without rules to follow.

Finally, we support the provision of resolution 57/270 B that automatic five-year and 10-year review mechanisms for a number of major United Nations conferences and summits are to be assessed on a case-by-case basis. We also support the United Nations holding a major event in 2005 to comprehensively review integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the major conferences and summits. I should like to reiterate that, as 2005 — a major year for the United Nations — will also see a review of the Millennium Summit and a high-level dialogue on financing for development, the United Nations should conduct consultations at an early date to determine the level, form, focus and interrelations of those high-level meetings.

We are prepared to continue to strengthen our cooperation and consultations with various parties in a joint effort for successful, integrated and coordinated United Nations follow-up actions.

Mr. Mustapha (Malaysia): My delegation welcomes the decision of the General Assembly to include consideration of this item in the agenda of the current session.

Most conferences and summits are prompted by a desire to discuss important issues of common interest and to explore solutions to problems. We attach great importance to the implementation of the decisions and

goals of all United Nations conferences and summits. It is imperative that effective monitoring mechanisms be established to ensure that conferences and summits achieve their desired goals and objectives.

In this connection, we thank the Secretary-General for his report to the General Assembly. It has assisted us in identifying the core elements of the framework that are essential for integrating follow-up processes, as projected in resolution 57/270 B, adopted by this body four months ago. The report also highlights issues that require our immediate attention. For its part, the Economic and Social Council, through its coordination segment, focused on its role in this regard at its 2003 substantive session, bearing in mind its crucial task to promote the achievement of internationally agreed development goals.

The question of the core elements of the framework that are essential for integrating follow-up processes with respect to implementation was discussed comprehensively during the deliberations leading up to the adoption of resolution 57/270 B, as well as during discussions held during the 2003 substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. My delegation intends, therefore, to touch on the issues relating to implementation actions highlighted in the report.

The Secretary-General has identified three kinds of implementation actions: first, ongoing activities that need to be strengthened; secondly, decisions to be adopted in implementing specific provisions of the resolution; and, thirdly, the question of future reviews. On the strengthening of ongoing activities, resolution 57/270 B has emphasized that a stronger link should be established between policy guidance and operational activities. We concur with the observation that the governing body has the responsibility to ensure that relevant policy decisions are integrated into the programme of work of the respective organizations.

In this regard, the respective Executive Boards of the relevant agencies, funds and programmes should undertake a more concerted effort to ensure greater coherence in the activities undertaken by them, in the furtherance of the objectives of their various programmes, culminating ultimately in the implementation of outcomes of conferences and summits in an integrated and coordinated manner. We are also in agreement with the assertion made by the General Assembly that system-wide interagency

coordination and cooperation to implement the outcomes of major conferences and summits should be further promoted through the work of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board (CEB) for Coordination and the United Nations Development Group.

It is clear to my delegation that the bulk of the follow-up activities would necessarily have to be carried out by the Economic and Social Council through its various functional commissions. These are the bodies that have been entrusted, and even at times specifically mandated, with the primary responsibility for the review and assessment of progress made in implementing the outcomes of United Nations conferences and summits. In this regard, the Economic and Social Council has the responsibility to ensure that its functional commissions work in a coordinated manner, especially when deciding on thematic issues to be considered by its various organs. In this regard, my delegation commends the Economic and Social Council for having begun, even prior to the adoption of resolution 57/270 B, to have joint Bureau meetings between its various functional commissions and between the functional commissions and the Council itself. Such meetings would prove invaluable in allowing the relevant chairpersons to discuss their multi-year programmes of work, in particular when deliberating thematic issues for a new term. As a member of the Economic and Social Council, my delegation reiterates its full support and commitment to work with other members to ensure success in our endeavours.

Through resolution 57/270 B, the Assembly had also requested the Economic and Social Council to establish a multi-year work programme for its coordination segment no later than 2004. The Bureau of the Economic and Social Council is to initiate consultations by January 2004, with the aim of reaching a decision before the start of its substantive session in the same year. However, as most of the functional commissions of ECOSOC had already adopted their multi-year programmes of work well in advance of the adoption of resolution 57/270 B, we are of the view that the Economic and Social Council could begin to play its role in this regard by considering a thematic issue that would involve the widest cross-section of the work of its various organs insofar as it is possible. The Economic and Social Council should continue with the consideration of such

thematic issues until its functional commissions have exhausted their current multi-year programmes of work. At such time, the multi-year programmes of work of the Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions could be streamlined so that they would consider particular cross-sectoral thematic issues common to each organ.

Having said this, my delegation would like to stress that such consideration of common cross-sectoral issues should be done in a fair and balanced manner, bearing in mind the tendency to overlook the consideration of social issues, alternatively referred to as soft issues, when juxtaposed with those with an economic or developmental aspect. We must remember that in developing countries, in particular, limited economic development will lead to a situation where social policies could not be effectively carried out, thus preventing the fulfilment of goals set out in the various outcome documents of United Nations summits and conferences. As such, one should not overlook the importance of coherence and the integration of social and economic imperatives.

My delegation reiterates its commitment to fulfil all obligations undertaken at various United Nations summits and conferences, and pledges its full support to both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and through the Council, its various functional commissions, in the furtherance and achievement of all goals of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

Mr. Chave (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): Switzerland took an active part in the General Assembly's Ad Hoc Working Group on the Integrated and Coordinated Implementation of and Follow-up to the Outcomes of the Major United Nations Conferences and Summits in the Economic and Social Fields.

Despite the important work achieved by the Group, it is our opinion that the emphasis placed on the Millennium Development Goals as a reference point for such a coordinated follow-up has fallen short of the expectations expressed at the Millennium Declaration's adoption. Moreover, despite Switzerland's conviction that a coordinated follow-up must cover all the major conferences, it is becoming evident that the issues addressed by these conferences have yet to be integrated in a concrete way in either policies or institutions.

Nevertheless, Switzerland is satisfied with the decisions taken concerning the working methods of the Economic and Social Council and the improvement in the functioning of its subsidiary organs, including the functional commissions, as well as with the suggestions regarding the General Assembly, particularly its Second and Third Committees. Each body is responsible for improving its own effectiveness and better coordinating its work, with a view to fully realizing the action plans elaborated at the major conferences and the Millennium Goals.

To accomplish this, we deem the following points to be of particular importance: more flexibility in the multi-year work programmes of the Council and its functional commissions; more efficacious working methods; greater coordination between the agenda of the Council and those of its functional commissions; reorganization and simplification of the Second Committee's agenda; improved coordination among the various offices of the Secretariat; regular reporting by all the functional commissions on the integrated follow-up of major conferences and summits; and improved coordination at all levels and among all actors, including Governments, international organizations — in particular, the United Nations, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization — civil society and the private sector.

On another level, we recognize the soundness of the Working Group's observations on the importance of the resources necessary to implement the recommendations of conferences and summits. However, there are limits to the resources made available through official development assistance for the realization of the Millennium Declaration's commitments. We must come up with new and innovative solutions. In this respect, Switzerland supports the Secretary-General's efforts to make the United Nations accessible to new actors and partners, who can bring with them new capacities and resources.

Without seeing any need to restructure the very foundations of the current multilateral architecture, Switzerland believes that the Monterrey Consensus — more specifically its Chapter III — is a step in the right direction, recognizing the need for collaboration among all the parties concerned in order to achieve the Millennium Goals. In our view, the specific role of the United Nations in the context of the follow-up to Monterrey is to contribute to improved cooperation, transparency and coordination between Governments,

civil society and public and private actors, as well as multilateral institutions. Switzerland feels that specific questions raised in the follow-up to Monterrey should be addressed in the Second Committee, and it looks forward to taking part in its debates over the coming weeks.

Mr. Ayari (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): The Tunisian delegation would first like to associate itself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and to acknowledge our colleague Abdellah Benmellouk, who presented that statement.

My country welcomes the discussion today on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. At the general debate of the current session, most Member States stressed the importance they attached to giving practical effect to the undertakings given by the international community at the major conferences and summits that marked the 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium with a view to eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development.

Those conferences and summits, including the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey Conference on Financing for Development and the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development gave rise to a great deal of expectation in the international community, in particular among the developing countries, who were hoping at last to see the advent of a stable, fair and united socio-economic order. These events have effectively charted a course for us all to follow to combat poverty, promote development and to ensure that peace, security and justice reign. They also provided the opportunity to define the key parameters and undertake commitments for a global partnership in order to achieve these targets.

Despite these commitments, we must acknowledge that many of the development targets set out in the Millennium Declaration will not be achieved by many countries. Instead, we are seeing an increase in the number of people living in poverty, particularly in Africa, a region where achieving these objectives is the greatest challenge. Therefore, we must pay close attention to the fulfilment of commitments undertaken in the framework of an implementation and follow-up

process that is energetic, systematic and results-based and that avoids duplication and wasted effort.

In this regard, we welcome the fact that the United Nations system is determined to achieve tangible results. The adoption in June 2003 of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B on integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields is particularly important because in our opinion it reflects an awareness of the need to stimulate energetic policies to promote implementation of and follow-up to these commitments. In that resolution the Assembly defined the roles that Member States, the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization, civil society and the private sector would play in implementing these commitments, all within the context of a partnership that requires each party to carry its own weight.

Admittedly, it is the developing countries that bear the primary responsibility for achieving these targets, but it is also clear that, given the interwoven nature of national economies and the world economic system, their efforts require the support of the international community, including the assistance of their developed partners, because most of them will not succeed alone. Success for developing countries also depends on establishing an international economic climate that is favourable to them.

The role of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO) in implementing the outcomes of the conferences was broadly emphasized by the General Assembly in the aforementioned resolution, which called for a strengthening of their contribution to implementing the outcomes of the conferences and summits. The high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, held on 14 April 2003, was an important milestone in reviewing the progress achieved and the obstacles encountered in implementing the Monterrey Consensus. We believe that that meeting will effectively contribute to strengthening the Economic and Social Council's cooperation with the key partners in Washington and Geneva. Furthermore, the high-level dialogue on financing for development, to be held on 29 and 30 October, will enable us to think more in depth about ways and means of translating the commitments undertaken at Monterrey into concrete actions.

With regard to the role of the Economic and Social Council, Tunisia welcomes the emphasis placed on the need to strengthen that pivotal body, which is charged with promoting the coordination and coherence of policies and with the implementation and comprehensive and coordinated follow-up of the outcomes of the major international conferences in the economic and social fields. We also attach great importance to the role played by the functional commissions, such as the Commission on Sustainable Development, and we call for a strengthening of the Economic and Social Council's relations with the regional commissions. In addition, we call for support for the development frameworks established at the regional level, such as the New Partnership for Africa's Development.

Moreover, the Tunisian delegation would like to highlight the need to enhance the capacity of national statistical systems, but that must be accompanied by progress in developing international indicators that will enable us to better assess situations and results of national implementation plans.

The scope of the problems and the complexity of the obstacles that must be overcome by developing countries demand that we be more resolute and devote more resources — at both the national and international levels — to ensuring economic growth and sustained and lasting development for those countries.

Official development assistance, despite efforts to better utilize it, continues to decline. The donor countries must honour their commitments to increase official development assistance to the level of 0.7 per cent of gross national product. Increasing such aid is also important to provide the United Nations system's operational activities with the maximum of success and effectiveness. In that regard, we highlight the role of United Nations funds and programmes — particularly the United Nations Development Programme — in supporting developing countries' efforts, particularly

with a view to eliminating poverty, as well as the need to ensure the financing of those funds and programmes in a more certain and predictable way.

Debt relief should be more significant and more rapid. It is also essential to facilitate and improve access to world markets for developing countries' products, which requires a reduction in agricultural subsidies and the elimination of tariff barriers. It is also a question of facilitating active participation by developing countries in decisions taken by major international organizations — not only the United Nations, but also the WTO, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

The Tunisian delegation believes that it is of the utmost importance to regularly assess progress achieved in implementing the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. We welcome the inclusion on the agenda of the current General Assembly session of an item entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields".

Finally, we should like to stress the importance of organizing a summit in 2005 to review progress in implementing all commitments undertaken in the Millennium Declaration on the basis of a report of the Secretary-General. We believe it is necessary to begin the preparations for that summit as soon as possible.

Implementing commitments undertaken by the international community is the only path that will lead to a better world. Let us work together to meet the challenges of underdevelopment, destitution, disease and malnutrition. Let us do that for the 1.2 billion people painfully surviving on less than one dollar per day, for the 840 million people suffering from hunger and for the 24,000 people — many of whom are children — who die of starvation every day.

The meeting rose at 1 05 p.m.



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President: The Hon. Julian R. Hunte (Saint Lucia)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 50 (continued)

Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields

Report of the Secretary-General (A/58/359)

Ms. Ndhlovu (South Africa): South Africa aligns itself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

It is with a sense of proud achievement that the South African delegation contributes to the debate on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. Not only did we actively participate in all of the major conferences and summits that took place during the last decade, we were also privileged to host both the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in 2001 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002.

South Africa strongly supports the recognition — given by resolution 57/270 B, which is the basis for discussions under this item — of the fact that we are beyond the normative debate and planning phase and have to ensure that the outcomes of major conferences and summits are indeed implemented. Having had

these conferences and summits, we now face the challenge of ensuring that the decisions taken at these global meetings are implemented in a coherent and effective manner. In this regard, the principal result that South Africa would like to see from the implementation of these decisions is that they would ultimately lead to a better life for all mankind.

South Africa, as part of the developing world, knows the great difficulties in achieving the goals of freedom from want and freedom from fear. This is a challenge that cannot be addressed by any one country in isolation. It is indeed a challenge for all of us and must be addressed in a multilateral context.

In this context, the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits provide a comprehensive basis for action at the national, regional and international levels, with the key objectives being poverty eradication, sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The fact that every country has the primary responsibility for its own economic and social development means that regional and international organizations, as well as the United Nations as a whole, also have a role to play in this important partnership. However, for this partnership to work, every Member State should undertake to implement the commitments it has made.

Africa has already shown its commitment to contribute to this notion of partnership by, among others, its active promotion and participation in the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). This home-grown African initiative, so generously

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supported by the United Nations and other Member States and organizations, is seeking to address Africa's particular problems within a coherent and institutionalized framework of partnership and mutual benefit.

However important this regional framework is to addressing the issues confronting Africa, the need for a international socio-economic environment that is conducive remains critical for it to be successful. It is because of this recognition that South Africa has expressed its disappointment on the failure of the discussions in Cancun, while in the same vein pronouncing its determination to get the development round, as agreed upon in Doha, back on track. We also believe in the necessity to ensure the full participation of developing countries in setting the agenda and determining the norms for international interaction in the economic, financial and monetary fields.

However, the United Nations system also has an important responsibility to stay fully engaged in the implementation of agreements and commitments reached at the major United Nations conferences and summits. Of particular importance is the need to ensure that policy guidelines from the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council on the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits be incorporated into the programmes of work and operational activities of the relevant funds and programmes of the United Nations.

My delegation recognizes the need to strengthen the role of the General Assembly as the highest intergovernmental mechanism for the formulation and appraisal of policy on matters relating to the coordinated and integrated follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the working methods of its committees and plenary meetings allow for maximum focus and participation, in order to enhance the role of the General Assembly in reviewing the progress made in implementation.

With reference to the important role of the General Assembly as a deliberative and legislative body to set norms and guidelines, it is therefore regarded as the ideal authority for overall monitoring and oversight of implementation regarding decisions taken in multilateral forums. The convening power of the United Nations, as was seen in the major summits

and conferences of the past decade, and as was reflected, for example, by the highest level of participation at the Millennium Summit, the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, suggests that the United Nations should play an overall coordination and monitoring role, overseeing the implementation by all actors, including from national Governments, regional and global institutions and civil society.

The Economic and Social Council can and should act as the central mechanism for system-wide coordination and should also continue to be strengthened. In that regard, my delegation is particularly supportive of the recommendation made in resolution 57/270 B, that the Economic and Social Council should review on a regular basis, by means of a cross-sectoral approach, the progress made in the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits and their follow-up processes and to assess its impact on the possible achievements of the goals and the targets of the conferences and summits. The role that the Statistical Commission could play by refining and finalizing indicators to assess the implementation of commitments and the achievement of development goals remains crucial.

In this ambit of partnership, it is also important to recognize the important role that the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO) should play in the implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits. The high-level meeting every spring between the Economic and Social Council, the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO, during which time the important issue of coherence and consistency of the international monetary, financial and trading systems in support of development and other matters are discussed, is already an indication of the effort to implement the decisions made at Monterrey to improve dialogue and coordination between the United Nations and those institutions. This bodes well for future discussions on the international development agenda and for taking stock of progress made in the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus.

At the same time, acknowledgement should also be given to the important role that non-governmental organizations, community based organizations and the private sector should play in the coordinated

implementation and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields.

The successful implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits lies with all of us — Member States, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system. The commitments made during these conferences and summits will come to nothing if we do not show the necessary political will to succeed. The goals that we have set ourselves at these major meetings to eradicate poverty and to improve the lives of millions of people are in danger of not being achieved.

I would also like to briefly reflect on the follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children.

The international community made profound commitments to children at the special session on children and endorsed unanimously the Declaration and Plan of Action, "A World Fit for Children". The Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols serve as a landmark treaty due to its almost universal ratification by Member States. The voices of children and their concerns and aspirations form an integral part of the outcome document adopted in 2002. These commitments to building a world fit for children must compel us to implement our obligations as a matter of priority, since the issues at stake, as Secretary-General Kofi Annan said, are about the future of humanity.

The international community is faced with global crises and a number of conflicts, which in all instances involve the lives of children caught up in conflict and humanitarian disasters. Yet, in many parts of the world, the challenges to improve children's lives have moved forward. The work of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), in partnership with Governments, has continued to address the rights of children in a comprehensive manner. Numerous national plans, based on the outcome of the special session, are in place and are being implemented. The international community therefore has a road map before it and should continue to deliver its promises to the children of the world.

In closing, allow me to voice my delegation's support for the recommendations made by the Secretary-General in his report (A/58/228) to address the serious issue of global road safety. It is again highlighted that the burden of road traffic injuries falls

disproportionately on people in low-and middle-income countries, with Africa possessing the highest road traffic death rate of 28 deaths per 100,000 population. World Health Organization projections suggesting that by 2020 road traffic injuries would rank third among causes of death and disability, ahead of such other health problems as malaria and HIV/AIDS, is a serious concern. The impact that this could have on the sustainable development of the developing countries speaks for itself.

I would, therefore, in particular, support the recommendation made by the Secretary-General in his report for stronger international cooperation to support the development of the national capacities of Member States in need thereof to address this problem. The role that the United Nations system could play in addressing global road safety could be, among others, the identification of a coordinating body within the United Nations system to facilitate and coordinate the efforts of global road safety. Such an effort should be welcomed.

Mr. Kazykhanov (Kazakhstan): Let me, at the outset, express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his report prepared under agenda item 50, entitled "Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields". In our view his report is the result of the thorough and comprehensive work carried out by the Secretariat and by the delegations of Member States that made recommendations under this agenda item within the framework of the open-ended ad hoc working group headed by the President of the Assembly.

We are encouraged by the report's observation that the global consensus generated by the United Nations summits and conferences of the last decade on issues of poverty eradication and sustainable development as central concerns of national and international policy frameworks has renewed the relevance of the work of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, and of its mission to guide and harmonize policies for development.

In that regard, the Millennium Summit truly marked a turning point in the process of transforming the emerging global consensus into specific goals and targets, backed by political commitment at the highest level. We pledged in the Millennium Declaration to

strengthen international solidarity and partnership in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals in a timely manner.

We share the view that the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development — two major conferences, held last year in Monterrey and Johannesburg respectively — have proved to be very useful global events in terms of offering focused mechanisms to monitor progress towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

At the same time, the issue of conceptual integrity of various efforts to follow up on the outcomes of those international summits and conferences is highly relevant in view of the need to ensure better coordination of global, regional and national activities for development. In this regard, it is my delegation's view that the existence of a structure for integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up is the key to promotion of mutually reinforcing action in the pursuit of the internationally agreed development goals.

Kazakhstan shares the view that an enabling environment at the national and international levels is of critical importance for attaining the agreed development goals. As for our country, we can say that it has become possible to successfully incorporate our development-goals commitments into our long-term national programmes and strategies as a result of the political will, clearly expressed by our leaders, to pursue the development of Kazakhstan, guided by the principle of the State's economic and social responsibility vis-à-vis its citizens.

Kazakhstan's report on the Millennium Development Goals, the first such report submitted by a country of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), demonstrated that those goals are fully reflected in our existing national development strategies, policies and programmes. We also agree that an enabling environment at the international level requires enhanced partnership between donor and recipient countries, based on a recognition of the national leadership and ownership of the development goals, as well as on sound policies and good governance at the national and international levels.

To achieve the internationally agreed development goals, it is necessary to step up efforts to mobilize and effectively use financial resources as a

means of implementation. Reaching the United Nations target for official development assistance of 0.7 per cent of gross national product, along with the mobilization of the domestic resources of recipient countries, should be considered a key factor in attaining such important goals as the elimination of poverty, the improvement of social indicators, the achievement of better living standards and the protection of our environment.

In that regard, our delegation attaches great importance to the High-Level Dialogue on Financing for Development to be held next week in accordance with the Monterrey Consensus in order to coordinate, at the intergovernmental level, follow-up to the Monterrey Conference.

Kazakhstan believes that the role of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO), is as crucial as ever in terms of assisting Governments in their efforts to comply with their development-goals commitments. The joint spring meetings of the Economic and Social Council, the WTO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) should continue to be an important instrument to monitor the progress of the United Nations system in this area of international cooperation.

Our delegation would like to welcome the decision of the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to move to a biennial cycle of work as an example of a coordinated approach to the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations summits and conferences. That decision, in our view, should facilitate a more meaningful assessment of progress in the follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations summits and conferences.

We also believe that an implementation review process should be used to reaffirm the goals and objectives agreed upon at conferences and summits and to identify obstacles and constraints as well as actions and initiatives to overcome them. In this context, a major event to be held in 2005 to review the progress achieved in implementing all the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration, as referred to by the General Assembly in its resolution 57/270 B, would, we hope, contribute to that process.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate our conviction that the United Nations should continue to

play a critical role in ensuring steady progress towards forging global partnerships for development and the implementation of the outcomes of global forums.

Mr. Jenie (Indonesia): Let me first thank the Secretary-General for his report on this important item (A/58/359). Also, we associate ourselves with the remarks made by the distinguished representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

The time has come for us to meet the challenges posed by the lack of progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. We must live up to the commitments made at the conferences and summits, where together we established internationally agreed development goals aimed at eradicating poverty, achieving sustained economic growth and promoting sustainable development.

Indeed, solid platforms for action emerged from those international gatherings to facilitate the achievement of development goals and targets, including the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Thus, we must move from the phase of goal-setting and commitment to the phase of concrete implementation at the national, regional and international levels. The international conferences and summits also successfully engaged civil society, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders in the development process. As stated in the Secretary General's report, "They thus marked the first crucial phase in the process of bringing development issues to the forefront of the multilateral agenda" (A/58/359, para. 4).

With this background in mind, my delegation welcomed resolution 57/270 B on the subject before us. We believe that this comprehensive resolution should be used for guidance and as the basis for the work of the relevant United Nations bodies and other stakeholders responsible for implementing the outcomes of the conferences and summits.

At the national level, appropriate policies and development strategies are indeed crucial for achieving the agreed development goals. The fact is that domestic economies are interwoven with the global economic system; that underlines the need to establish an enabling international economic environment to

support national development efforts. In fulfilling this goal, it is important to stress, inter alia, the need to enhance partnerships between developed and developing countries; the importance of strengthening the coherence of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organization; and the need to engage other relevant stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector, in this process.

This holistic approach will necessarily require the formulation of a global strategy. In the context of the agenda item before us, such a move will be a step in that direction. For that purpose, the initiative taken by the Secretary-General to establish a high-level panel of eminent personalities is certainly relevant and timely. In that regard, my delegation takes this opportunity to call on the high-level panel of eminent personalities to strengthen efforts aimed at integrating and coordinating implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits. Other United Nations bodies have equally important roles to play in this regard.

The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and its relevant functional commissions, acting as a three-tiered system for follow-up to and review of the conferences, are all playing crucial roles in the implementation process. It is therefore important to ensure that each of those organs fully grasps the linkages between the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits and, as part of a joint effort, contributes towards achieving an integrated framework for the implementation of the internationally agreed development goals.

Furthermore, it is essential to strengthen the links between policy development at the intergovernmental level and the operational work being undertaken at the country level by the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. Such an approach will foster the greater coherence of the whole range of activities and undertakings initiated by the funds, programmes and other relevant organizations and bodies of the United Nations as they work towards the realization of the outcomes of the conferences and summits.

Towards those ends, we should strive for greater coherence and coordination in the work of the General Assembly, especially in plenary meetings and in the

Second and Third Committees. That would ensure that the system is fully equipped to effectively adopt an integrated approach to follow up the outcomes of the conferences and summits.

Concerning the programme of work of the Second Committee, my delegation is of the view that the restructuring and mainstreaming of its agenda needs to be reflected in the framework for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to conference outcomes. That must be done without diluting any agenda items, such as those concerning debt, trade or financing for development, that are of critical importance to developing countries.

Another positive measure that could aid the implementation process is the possible comprehensive review in 2005 of actions taken to achieve that goal. It is believed that such a major event would prove politically attractive and powerful for Member States.

Accordingly, the review process should be placed high on the agenda of the General Assembly, coinciding with the decision taken at the fifty-seventh session and taking into account the need to give more importance, coherence and visibility to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. In that regard, I would like to stress that the importance of such a review should be viewed within the framework of the integrated and coordinated follow-up to the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits.

In achieving our objective, my delegation would like to emphasize the crucial role of the General Assembly as the highest inter-governmental mechanism and the most important tool for the appraisal of policy on matters related to the integrated and coordinated follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits. The General Assembly must ensure that the goal of integrating and harmonizing policy guidance, based on the recommendation of the Economic and Social Council as the coordinating mechanism of the functional commissions and specialized agencies, is put into effect. Moreover, the General Assembly should begin to enhance policy coherence among the United Nations system, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization in achieving development goals, particularly in eradicating poverty, promoting food security and enhancing sustainable development.

In conclusion, my delegation would like to reaffirm that the focus must be on implementation while preserving the thematic unity of each of the conferences and summits and their respective follow-up mechanisms. To gear up further, we should also seek to ensure that the implementation process complements the ongoing reform process of the United Nations as a whole. However great the challenge may be, one has to be optimistic in realizing the objectives. It is our hope that we shall not move backwards but display the political will to progress consistently, as required by General Assembly in resolution 50/227 on further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields.

Mr. Neil (Jamaica). Jamaica associates itself with the statement made by the representative of Morocco on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. We also join previous speakers in thanking the Secretary-General for his report on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields (A/58/359). The report provides a useful assessment of the preliminary steps being taken to implement resolution 57/270 B.

The adoption of that resolution marked an important step in support for the consensus on the need for a sharper focus on implementation. It creates a framework for linking policy development at the intergovernmental level and operational activities at the country level. If we are to meet the Millennium Development Goals and ensure that concrete and practical efforts are made to achieve the various goals we have set in the extensive set of conferences and summits, all United Nations bodies should work in concert to improve coordination in support of implementation.

While only four months have elapsed since the adoption of the resolution, we are pleased that, as indicated by Secretary-General, concrete steps are being taken in a number of areas both in the General Assembly and in the Economic and Social Council to give effect to crucial decisions and recommendations. However, we would have liked to have been provided with some detail with respect to the actual functioning of the follow-up mechanisms established in accordance with chapter III of the Monterrey Consensus in order to facilitate an in-depth analysis and assessment of the work done to date. It is important that in fut

sessions of the General Assembly special emphasis be placed on providing such material.

With regard to further action to be taken by the General Assembly during this fifty-eight session to support implementation of the resolution, we urge that every effort be made to expedite consideration of the revised indicative programme of work of the Second Committee to allow a decision to be taken by the stipulated deadline in December 2003. It is important, however, that the question of restructuring the work of the Committee be carefully addressed and that the quality of the deliberations and the effectiveness of the Committee's work not be negatively affected. It is particularly important that issues of particular interest to developing countries and to the ongoing debate on global economic policy not be overshadowed in any way and continue to be given priority.

We welcome the recommendation for increased consultation between the Presidents of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council, and we urge that concrete steps be taken to ensure the institutionalization of such contacts.

The Economic and Social Council has a central role to play in providing oversight, and it remains the most appropriate body for coordinating follow-up on the implementation of the commitments made at major United Nations conferences and summits. There is a clear need for enhanced coherence, coordination and cooperation at the intergovernmental level between the Economic and Social Council and intergovernmental organizations such as the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO). The annual spring meetings between the Council, the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO should therefore be strengthened, and we welcome the Council's decision, in its resolution 2003/47, to invite representatives of the Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to participate in future sessions.

In order to improve the value of these exchanges, however, it is important that the outcomes of those meetings provide concrete, action-oriented proposals which will have practical effect in the operation of these bodies with respect to development issues. This would facilitate more effective coherence and pragmatic actions in support of follow-up, particularly of the Monterrey Consensus.

It is important in all of this that we do not lose focus by over-concentration on analysis of themes and cross-cutting issues. We should not be converting the review of implementation into a complicated academic exercise. To avoid this, the Economic and Social Council should maintain a special focus on monitoring. Jamaica had supported the establishment of a separate monitoring mechanism, but, since that was not forthcoming, it is hoped that the Council will fulfil that role.

In this context, my delegation hopes that the decision that the Economic and Social Council conduct reviews through the consideration of cross-sectoral thematic issues common to the conferences outcomes will not detract from the need to monitor indicators and concrete steps by all actors to meet specific targets. In this respect, the Secretary-General and the Department of Social and Economic Affairs should support this approach by informing the Council of specific details and progress, or lack thereof, in relation to commitments made at the major conferences. That would enable the General Assembly to address concrete challenges to implementation on an ongoing basis.

The functional commissions have an important role to play within their respective mandates to improve the effectiveness of the Economic and Social Council in follow-up. By better planning its work on common conference themes, the Council will be able to engage with the functional commissions. We expect those commissions, in order fully to support the Council, urgently to review their working methods with a view to directing greater attention to the outcomes of major conferences. We look forward to an early report from the Commissions to the Council on their efforts.

We believe that well-organized and effective reviews of major United Nations conferences and summits are vital for maintaining political momentum, raising awareness and assessing new challenges and constraints to the implementation of commitments. We agree that the question of periodicity and of the format of reviews should be carefully considered on a case-by-case basis. That approach should not, however, serve to frustrate efforts to undertake much-needed reviews and ongoing assessments of the implementation of the conference and summit outcomes.

The holding of a major event during the General Assembly in 2005, which would ensure a

comprehensive review, is therefore welcome. It will represent an important opportunity for the international community to take stock of the progress being made. The ongoing work in ensuring implementation is one of the important elements in the revitalization of the General Assembly and therefore should be treated as a matter of the highest priority.

Mr. Rao (India): We thank the Secretary-General for his report on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. My delegation associates itself with the statement made by the Permanent Representative of Morocco in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of 77.

We welcome the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 57/270 B, which provides, in our view, a framework for the General Assembly to provide political oversight to the implementation of and follow-up to the major United Nations conferences held over the past decade.

The objective of any follow-up exercise should be to address the issue of implementation. The major United Nations conferences and summits have in their outcomes a set of well-defined targets and commitments for which all Member States have accepted a shared responsibility. The implementation of outcomes would be a clear demonstration of the fulfilment of such shared responsibility and would contribute immensely to the strengthening of the United Nations.

For the developing countries, the implementation of the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits presents an enormous challenge. They are not in a position to fulfil all the commitments they undertook with respect to the outcomes of such events, especially as regards the Millennium Declaration, without further progress in international cooperation. The developed countries have special obligations in the areas of official development assistance, debt relief and market access.

Reviewing the implementation of conference outcomes requires a two-pronged approach. First, it needs an integrated and coordinated approach to the overarching goals common to all or many of the conferences. Secondly, it also requires a focused review that seeks to retain the identity and integrity of every major conference and to stimulate progress in the

implementation of agreements in the specific area or sector covered by each conference. The Economic and Social Council and its functional commissions can play a major role in addressing this task. To that purpose, the Council will pursue the establishment of a multi-year programme of work for the consideration of identified cross-sectoral thematic issues.

We welcome the opportunity to assess the functioning of the follow-up mechanisms established pursuant to the Monterrey Consensus. We would like to see greater synergy between the annual meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on the one hand and the biennial high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the other. Apart from the high quality of the dialogue in terms of issues addressed and level of specificity, what we also require is an effective mechanism to assess the implementation of commitments and agreements reached in the Monterrey Consensus.

The report of the Secretary-General (A/58/359) speaks in paragraph 11 of the need to establish a stronger link between policy guidance and operational activities, as provided for in resolution 57/270 B. We would, however, like to sound a note of caution in that regard. The principal foundation for the operational activities of the United Nations development system is country-driven programming or, in other words, the United Nations system responding to the needs and priorities of the recipient countries. We believe that nothing should be done to undermine that principle. The linkage provision should not be misused to thrust donor-driven or Secretariat-driven agendas on the developing countries. The only possible link would be to ensure that the activities of the funds and programmes in recipient countries advance the implementation of the conference outcomes.

On the question of the review of the Second Committee's programme of work, my delegation would like to point out that the exercise must not be seen in isolation but should be viewed as part of the efforts for the revitalization of the General Assembly. Any decision that might be taken in the limited context of the Second Committee should be subject to review in the light of decisions that are adopted in the overall process of revitalization of the General Assembly and reform of the United Nations.

The report presented by the Secretary-General this year on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323) contains several useful suggestions. We agree with the proposal made by the Secretary-General for the holding of a major event in 2005. Such an event should provide an opportunity for a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in implementing all the commitments made in the Millennium Declaration.

Mr. Maalouf (United States of America): The United States welcomes the opportunity to speak on the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. We strongly support the need to frame our work at the United Nations around the outcomes of the major summits and conferences and we participated actively in the open-ended ad hoc working group on this subject. We recall that the Secretary-General has pointed out the urgent need for us to take a critical look at all of the General Assembly's activities and ask ourselves whether they are relevant to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and other conference outcomes and whether they have the desired impact.

While recognizing that the working group's report was only adopted in June and that it is therefore somewhat premature to report on outcomes, we must not lose sight of the fact that a number of fairly modest recommendations came out of that group, recommendations which can be acted on during this General Assembly session. We are pleased that the bureaux of the Second and Third Committees have discussed overlap and duplication and are looking for ways to take up, in a more coordinated manner, issues relating to conference follow-up.

As stated in resolution 57/270 B, the Second Committee is to consider its programme of work and make a decision on it by December 2003. Members need to bring the vision and commitments of the major summits and conferences — such as the Millennium Summit, the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development — to the work of the Second Committee. We need to move towards partnerships and action and away from sterile rhetoric and timeworn themes.

The United States welcomes the mandate of resolution 57/270 B by which the Economic and Social Council functional commissions must examine their method of work in order to better pursue the implementation of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits. The ongoing work of the Commission on Sustainable Development offers us an example that the other Economic and Social Council functional commissions may wish to consider following. Last May, the Commission, at its eleventh session, adopted a series of trail-blazing reforms. Members agreed to limit the number of negotiations and to focus on how the international community — Governments, international organizations, civil society and the private sector — can work together to achieve our ambitious and critically important objectives. Taken together, these steps will make the Commission on Sustainable Development and the United Nations more responsive and relevant to the needs of all, especially developing countries.

We look forward to working constructively with other delegations to follow through on the challenging task before us.

The President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item for this meeting.

Agenda item 51

2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa

Note by the Secretary-General (A/58/136 and Corr.1)

Mr. Alessandro (Italy): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the associated countries Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey and the European Free Trade Association country member of the European Economic Area Norway align themselves with this statement.

This important debate is yet another indication of the attention that malaria control and prevention has received throughout the international community, particularly after the World Health Organization, together with UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank, founded

the Roll Back Malaria Partnership and since the holding of the Abuja Summit in 2000. Over the last few years, we have seen a change in attitude that has placed malaria high on the agenda of Governments, international organizations and development programmes. Through the Roll Back Malaria Initiative and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, a new form of co-operative partnership has started between low-income countries and the donor community.

The European Union warmly welcomes such developments. We recognize the need for more resources to implement concrete actions, but, at the same time, we must be aware that those resources are limited and should be used primarily to create continuity in awareness and support. That means day-by-day support at the grass-roots level, involving Governments, local communities and aid agencies in a participatory manner, in order to meet the targets agreed upon for the Decade to Roll Back Malaria.

We fully endorse the final declaration of the Second Summit of the African Union, in which Heads of State and Government confirmed that the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis is a priority for the continent. The burden of those diseases and their impact on the population are heavy, and they inevitably affect development initiatives planned within the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the Group of Eight Africa Action Plan.

This year, more than a million people will die from malaria. Many more will contract the disease. Of the 500 million people suffering from malaria, 450 million, representing 90 per cent of the total, are sub-Saharan Africa's poorest citizens. In addition, we are aware that malaria costs Africa from \$10 billion to \$12 billion annually in its gross domestic product. That includes medical costs, missed schooling, lower productivity, less foreign direct investment and lower tourism revenues. Moreover, malaria claims the lives of many African children every day. The European Union expresses its deepest concern at this situation and its willingness to act to reverse it.

To end this cycle of suffering and poverty, Governments and the private sector are accelerating malaria research. As we pick up the pace on malaria research, we must also greatly expand existing prevention, care and treatment approaches, which are mutually dependent. Global funding to combat malaria

will require resources matching the scale of the crisis. Approximately \$60 million a year is invested in malaria research, and \$200 million is spent annually to treat impoverished patients and distribute mosquito nets and insecticides. In that regard, the European Union is committed to strengthening and increasing financial support for research and development.

Allow me to describe briefly the actions we have undertaken so far. Under the last European framework programme, covering the period 1998 to 2002, we implemented 26 different research projects on malaria at a cost of more than 30 million Euros. Nearly 100 research institutions, based in 15 African countries, 11 European countries and five Asian and South American countries, participated in the project. Through that partnership to tackle malaria, we encourage strengthened cooperation within the framework of international initiatives such as the European Malaria Vaccine Initiative, the African Malaria Vaccine Trial Network and the new European-Developing Countries Clinical Trial Partnership.

Furthermore — following as well the recommendations made in General Assembly resolution 57/294 on the Decade to Roll Back Malaria — last July the European Parliament and the European Council adopted a regulation on assistance in fighting poverty-related diseases in developing countries, namely HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. In allocating funding and expertise, priority will be given to the least developed countries and the most disadvantaged sections of the population. The financial framework for the implementation of this new regulation for the period 2003 to 2006 is set at 351 million euros.

The European Union has also noted that, in spite of the fact that most of the key pharmaceuticals are off patent, few developing countries have sufficient capacity to manufacture them. Moreover, for the time being, available drugs are not well suited for developing countries, and malaria drugs are becoming less and less effective as a result of increased parasite resistance. We should therefore find new drugs appropriate to Africa's special needs and take into account local distribution problems and cold chain availability.

In that regard, we encourage interested parties, especially the pharmaceutical industry, to promote sustainable local production for national and regional

markets, aiming at the transfer of technology. For that reason, the European Union and its member States fully endorse the Doha Declaration on the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and Public Health.

Many African countries are working to fight malaria, but they cannot do it alone. Like HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, this disease requires a well coordinated, comprehensive and consistent response, which is beyond the financial and human resources of many developing countries. Because of their magnitude and transitional nature, poverty-related diseases require a systematic response from the international community. In that respect, we commend the proactive role played by the United Nations and the World Health Organization.

We believe public health is a public responsibility. Actions targeting the poverty-related disease must be carried out within the larger context of improving health care systems in developing countries and making those systems accessible to all. Improving health care is a precondition for and a key element of sustainable development. The European Union is committed to providing partner countries with assistance consistent with their own development plans, thus taking into account the overall objectives of improving the population's health and reducing poverty.

If the international community is capable of building a true global partnership with effective tools, and if developed and developing countries and the public and private sectors are able to work together towards this common goal, we strongly believe that malaria can be definitively rolled back throughout the world, as it has been in Europe.

Mr. Andjaba (Namibia): In his report contained in document A/58/136 the Secretary-General reveals that, in 2005 — when we review the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals — he, in close collaboration with the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), will present to the august Assembly a progress report on the targets of the Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, particularly in Africa.

The importance of that submission to the sixtieth session of the General Assembly is underlined by the fact that, in Africa, an increasing number of deaths is being caused by malaria. It is in that context that heads

of State or Government of the African Union, meeting in July at the Second Ordinary Session of the Assembly in Maputo, Mozambique, reaffirmed their commitment, enshrined in the Abuja Declaration and the plan of action adopted for the Roll Back Malaria Initiative. It is for that reason that my delegation thanks the Secretary-General for his report and welcomes this debate.

Mr. Hoscheit (Luxembourg), Vice-President, took the Chair

Malaria continues to be a major public health problem in Namibia, and thus warrants special attention in terms of monitoring trends and formulating control strategies and prevention at all levels of the health care system and the community. According to health service statistics, an average of 450,000 malaria cases and 800 deaths from malaria are reported countrywide annually. This amounts to an incidence rate of 248 per 1,000 population and a mortality rate of 45 per 100,000 population per year. As one can expect, children under the age of five years and pregnant women are at higher risk of getting malaria and suffering its consequences. Our efforts to combat this disease are impeded by the problem of inadequate resources, compounded by the shortage of trained personnel.

In addressing this problem, in 1991 the Government launched a comprehensive programme to control malaria and other vector-borne diseases. Through this programme a number of activities have been undertaken to improve disease management, including the training of health workers, intensification of house spraying and improved reporting through the health information system.

While challenges remain, we have indeed made progress. At the national level, the Government has demonstrated its firm commitment to tackling the problem of malaria by establishing a national malaria control programme, appointing malaria control staff and allocating regular budgetary and logistical support.

The national policy and strategy on malaria was launched in 1995. That policy document describes the goals, malaria control strategies and activities at all levels of the health care system. It is also intended to inform both health workers and the general public about the role they can play in reducing malaria morbidity and mortality to the lowest possible level.

To date, 2000 health workers have been trained in malaria case management and microscopic diagnosis, which is believed to have markedly improved the quality of malaria diagnosis and treatment. It was possible to significantly improve the coverage and quality of spraying in the affected areas following a major input from the Government and our Roll Back Malaria partners.

To reduce the impact of malaria among the vulnerable population groups, about 20,000 children under the age of five years and pregnant women have been provided with insecticide-treated nets in selected highly affected areas. In order to mitigate the dreadful effects of malaria epidemics among affected communities, weekly malaria surveillance has been put in place. This has facilitated the detection of malaria epidemics at a relatively early stage. To facilitate the implementation of malaria control in the country, a five-year Roll Back Malaria strategic plan has been finalized.

On 22 September 2003, high-level meetings of the General Assembly were convened to mobilize efforts to address the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Today, we meet to discuss yet another killer disease, which in many African countries is claiming more lives than HIV/AIDS. This is a fact that needs to be emphasized as a rallying tool in the process of raising awareness and resource mobilization.

Malaria is preventable, treatable and curable, as stated clearly in the report of the Secretary-General. One can die from malaria only if and when not treated promptly and effectively. The challenge, then, is to assist the affected countries. The use of anti-malaria tools is widespread and common. Unlike the case of the AIDS virus, many African countries have access to anti-malarial drugs. However, the growing resistance to current drugs compounds the problem. This is a challenge that needs to be addressed now, together with the question of affordability. We can achieve the Abuja target of 60 per cent coverage only when the new and improved drugs are affordable.

Efforts at the community level are crucial, and, as pointed out in the Secretary-General's report, home treatment supported by public information and pre-packaging can assist substantially in reducing child mortality. Malaria affects the areas surrounding affected communities and their efforts towards sustainable development. In this context, research on

environmental management for malaria control in development should be supported.

While we continue to support ongoing research for a vaccine, we call on the international community to support the efforts of the affected countries by providing the tools, which are already available. In that connection, we welcome and further encourage the transfer of technology for the production of insecticide-treated nets and efforts to increase access to anti-malaria medicines. We view the transfer of this new technology as a firm beginning in effectively tackling malaria in the affected African countries. Making generous contributions to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is one effective way of assisting the affected countries. We commend the efforts of the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and other Roll Back Malaria partners in mobilizing the business community to take part in the global campaign against malaria.

We welcome the increase in resources mobilized for the Roll Back Malaria campaign, but more resources are needed to complement those of the affected countries.

In conclusion, the report before us contains recommendations to the affected countries, the international community as a whole, and in particular the private sector, in the fight against malaria. We urge the implementation of those recommendations, so as to assist African countries in implementing the Abuja Declaration.

Mr. Aboul Gheit (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): The General Assembly today is considering an item of great significance — the Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries.

Malaria's socio-economic impact is not limited to the African continent. Studies have shown that malaria is endemic in more than 100 countries, whose populations represent 40 per cent of the total population of the world. Studies have also shown that 90 per cent of those infected by the disease — whose number ranges from 300 million to 500 million people — are Africans.

Regrettably, children represent the majority of the 3 million people who die from the disease every year. This is particularly regrettable given not only the high rate of infection and death among adults and children,

but also in view of the painful scientific fact that malaria is curable if diagnosed and treated early. For that reason, we must focus on the humanitarian, not the commercial, aspect of dealing with this disease.

Reports indicate that the African continent requires nearly \$1 billion a year to combat malaria effectively. Reports indicate also that the financing available is only about a quarter of what is needed. My delegation therefore agrees with the statement in the report of the Secretary-General that the level of international funding to combat malaria is inadequate. We support his call to bolster governmental expenditures in African countries with greater and more comprehensive international funding.

If malaria, as facts have shown, is both a cause and a consequence of poverty, we cannot expect developing countries to succeed in overcoming the health problems they face without a tangible increase in development assistance, including the alleviation of the debt burden of those countries, to redirect more resources to health services, to promote prevention and treatment programmes, and to improve general health-care services in general.

Every 30 seconds a child dies of malaria. I therefore call on all Governments, in particular the community of donor States, to make some simple calculations: how many children will have died during the delivery of this statement? How many children will die during the discussion of this item? How many children must die before the international community moves to eradicate this disease?

Malaria is not considered incurable. On the contrary, there are means of treatment and prevention. All that is required would be a reasonable percentage of what the world spends daily on armaments and on the building of vast military arsenals.

Ms. Babemuka (Kenya): My delegation commends the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for the documentation provided for this agenda item.

Malaria is the second most deadly disease in Africa, after the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Recognizing the magnitude of the problem, the General Assembly, at its fifty-first session, appealed to the international community and to non-governmental organizations to allocate substantial resources — especially through the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria — for developing countries, particularly in

Africa. The goal was to enable African countries fully to implement the plan of action adopted at Abuja for the Roll Back Malaria initiative.

We are grateful indeed to the World Health Organization and to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for their joint efforts to compile a report on malaria in Africa, which was released on Africa Malaria Day, observed on 25 April last in a coordinated launch in Nairobi; Washington, D.C.; and London. We also appreciate the efforts of the World Bank and of other partners in resource mobilization and in financing the campaign against malaria.

At the national level, Kenya recognizes that good health is a prerequisite for the socio-economic development of any country. We are a signatory to the Abuja Declaration on Roll Back Malaria. We have responded to the Abuja Declaration through the removal of taxes and tariffs associated with insecticide-treated net products. A National Malaria Strategy has been put in place and focuses on improving malaria case management at all levels of the health sector; reducing the risks of malaria during pregnancy; increasing the use of insecticide-treated nets and other vector-control technologies; and responding to malaria epidemics.

The National Malaria Control Council (NMCC) has since been reconstructed to become the Inter-Agency Coordinating Committee. That Committee will be a more effective political and financial management tool for soliciting and directing investment aimed at rolling back malaria in Kenya. The objective is to reduce morbidity and mortality caused by malaria by 30 per cent among Kenya's population by the year 2006 and to sustain that improved level of control through 2010.

Significant resources to Kenya districts are now being mobilized through health sector reform. That reform will provide the framework and financing mechanisms for improved district-led support for curative and preventive services. The Division of Malaria Control will support planning of district-led strategies in concert with the national malaria strategy.

In order to enhance those efforts, the Government of Kenya, in collaboration with other stakeholders, intends to strengthen preventive and promotive health care through malaria control, an expanded immunization programme, integrated control of childhood illness and the prevention of

environmentally related communicable diseases. We are also trying to strengthen curative health services so as to manage the top 10 killer diseases through the provision of health personnel, drugs and equipment. In addition, Kenya would like to expand health insurance coverage and access for all its citizens.

National efforts in the fight against malaria require international support through funding, capacity-building and equipment. Kenya has drawn up a strategic plan that has enabled us to benefit from the Global Fund. Such funds will be utilized to strengthen malaria early-warning systems and studies in order to improve detection of outbreaks and response to them.

In conclusion, we must work together with the international community to strengthen national interventions in the fight against the major killer diseases in developing countries. It is very urgent that our development partners honour their commitments by contributing to the Global Fund to fight the three maladies that continue to afflict developing countries.

Mr. Menan (Togo) (spoke in French): Last year, when the General Assembly was considering the item that is before it today, the Togolese delegation strongly urged the international community to make every effort to attain the objectives set out in the framework of the Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, particularly in Africa. From that perspective, and in keeping with the views that we initially expressed, Togo believes that the Decade's objectives should be a genuine challenge for countries where malaria is endemic and for the international community to meet at all costs.

It is paradoxical that malaria, which everyone agrees is a disease that can be cheaply controlled and cured, remains one of the primary causes of death in African countries, as indicated by statistics set out in the report on malaria in Africa in 2003, published jointly by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). According to those statistics, more than 3,000 children in Africa die from the disease every day.

The Secretary-General addresses that state of affairs in his report on implementation of the Millennium Declaration (A/58/323), when he notes with bitterness that, despite the progress achieved with regard to children's health in developing countries in the 1990s, nearly 11 million children die each year before their fifth birthday, primarily from diseases that

can be easily prevented or treated, malaria among them.

However, it is encouraging to note that, because of the proclamation in 2001 of the Decade to Roll Back Malaria and the launching of the Roll Back Malaria initiative three years earlier by WHO, UNICEF, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, preventing and fighting the disease are again becoming top priorities at the national and international levels. That is also made clear in the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/136), submitted to the General Assembly in keeping with the recommendations contained in resolution 57/294, which the Assembly adopted at its last session. As the report recalls, administering medicines and using insecticide-treated mosquito nets are still the only effective ways to fight the disease.

However, access to treated mosquito nets remains relatively limited in Africa — despite notable recent efforts to bring mosquito nets into general use — because of their high cost, which is an obstacle to their widespread use. That is why Togo commends the Secretary-General for his proposal to persuade companies that extract petroleum products on the African continent to contribute to the Roll Back Malaria initiative in Africa by providing at greatly reduced cost the polymers used in manufacturing mosquito nets. We fervently hope to see the General Assembly endorse that recommendation as well as the others contained in the aforementioned report.

To attest to Togo's commitment to pursuing efforts aimed at promoting the health of the Togolese people, despite the financial difficulties the country has faced for more than 10 years, since the suspension of the aid that it had received from its main development partners, the head of the Togolese State announced to UNICEF authorities in June the Togolese Government's decision to lower customs tariffs on insecticide-treated mosquito nets.

Here, we should stress that, despite the scarcity of their resources and the problems of every kind that they face, African countries are attempting to various degrees to initiate health programmes that place priority on fighting malaria. Those countries are mindful of the need to increase national investments in the health sector and to improve its management, particularly through greater integration of anti-malaria activities into their development efforts in the health

sector, in conformity with their commitments under the Declaration and Plan of Action on the Roll Back Malaria in Africa initiative, adopted in Abuja, Nigeria, in 2000. However, they cannot succeed in that endeavour unless they receive adequate assistance from the international community, as the report of the Secretary-General opportunely recalls.

With regard to pharmaceutical products, according to a study by the Pasteur Institute in France, researchers in areas where malaria is endemic have not been able to develop a viable remedy for all forms of the parasites that are responsible for the disease. The study also states that one of the major difficulties confronting researchers is fighting the great ability of mosquitoes — vectors of the parasite — to adapt to treatments and that the parasites deposited by mosquitoes into the human organism are resistant to medicines, whereas mosquitoes themselves develop resistance to insecticides.

However, it is reassuring that research continues to make appreciable progress, as attested by a British pharmaceutical group's recent launching of a new product, called Lapdap, designed to fight the most deadly form of malaria, which is the most widespread form in sub-Saharan Africa. Yet it seems that, if the political will prevails and if pharmaceutical companies are not too much bent on the frenetic quest for high profits, the current efforts could sooner or later be successful, both in discovering a treatment for all types of the parasites that cause the disease and in developing a vaccine.

In this campaign against malaria, Togo, like other African States, very much hopes that the international community will not cease to support seriously affected countries so that lives can continue to be saved and so that the Decade to Roll Back Malaria will be able to reverse the trend of the disease.

In that way, the international community would respond to one of the specific needs of Africa: promoting the health and well-being of our peoples. And above all, it could help to spare families in distant Africa the tragic, wrenching scenes, often marked by the death of a child simply because the parents did not have enough money — which in many cases would be less than \$1 — to buy the necessary drugs.

In conclusion, I wish to reiterate the gratitude of my Government to the United Nations agencies, particularly the World Health Organization and the

United Nations Children's Fund, as well as to the various foundations for their positive contribution in the struggle to combat malaria. The Government of Togo urges donors to provide further support for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): The Eritrean delegation takes this opportunity to thank the Secretary-General for his informative report (A/58/136) on agenda item 51, entitled "2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa".

My delegation participates in this debate anticipating that the review of the first three years of the 10-year programme will enable us to identify the obstacles that confronted us and the various means by which we can get rid of, or attempt to get rid of, those obstacles. It hopes that this exchange of views will enable us, if necessary, to readjust our programmes and to reorganize our priorities and approaches.

Unlike HIV/AIDS, malaria is not a new pestilence. Humanity has known and lived with it for millennia. Although, fortunately, it has been completely eradicated in most parts of the world for at least several decades, in some unfortunate areas it continues to kill or debilitate large sections of the population. Even worse, it has recurred in areas from which it had successfully been eradicated. Among the worst hit is the Horn of Africa, even though previously it had made progress, owing to several national eradication programmes.

The statistical data are grim. In most of the countries of the Horn of Africa, including Eritrea, almost 30 per cent of the population is victim to malaria. Worse, almost 70 per cent of the population lives in malaria-endemic areas. In Eritrea, the death rate among children hospitalized with malaria is about 7.4 per cent.

The causes of the continued existence of malaria may differ from area to area. In the Horn of Africa, the primary reason for this calamity has been war — never-ending war. Malaria has had at least as much impact as HIV/AIDS on our economies, and in some cases it has had a more negative one, not only because of its debilitating effects on a much greater workforce, particularly among the peasantry, but also because the malaria-endemic areas are largely unavailable for cultivation. Indeed, in Eritrea malaria is the greater threat.

Thus, malaria is as much an economic threat as it is a health problem and has influenced socio-economic development programming in African countries. It is for this reason that the Eritrean Government has, since 1991, addressed the problem with the seriousness it deserves, has given it high priority and is determined to wage an unremitting struggle against the plague.

The Government of Eritrea has, *inter alia*, taken the following concrete measures in its war against malaria.

First, in addition to earlier efforts, the Ministry of Health inaugurated a five-year malaria reduction programme for the period 2001 to 2005. The major goal of this holistic programme adopted by the Ministry was to significantly control the further spread of the disease while, at the same time, preventing more infection among vulnerable groups by the strengthening of epidemiological surveillance. Its ambition was to minimize the effects of malaria on the capacities of the population by reducing mortality, morbidity and the incidence of malaria by 80 per cent, and to reduce malaria epidemics by 90 per cent by the end of 2005. The programme is largely on course.

Second, it established the national malaria control programme, which is responsible for the formulation of malaria control policies, plans and guidelines; coordination and control of programmes; monitoring and evaluation of programme activities; and coordination of technical assistance and research.

Third, it has trained village health agents and assigned them to provide malaria control services at the grass-roots level. These agents diagnose and treat simple cases of malaria, disseminate awareness information, mobilize communities for environmental management and identify vector-breeding sites close to communities. This is made possible through village meetings and periodic seminars given by the village agents, and through the coordination of community participation in weekly environmental management activities, including the draining and filling of breeding sites.

Fourth, through its regional and local offices, the Government provides insecticide-impregnated bed nets to the needy population. It is hoped that, by the end of 2005, every household will have at least two such bednets.

Fifth, it employs combination therapy for the treatment of the disease at all levels and has evolved a detailed treatment regimen known as the Eritrean standard treatment guidelines.

Sixth, it carries out indoor house-spraying activities, albeit selectively, on the basis of a previous history of malaria in a given area and/or evidence of a sudden increase in other areas. This may, in some cases, include total coverage of villages in affected areas.

Seventh, it routinely conducts tests of insecticide spraying to determine the susceptibility or resistance of the vector to insecticides selected for vector control.

Eighth, it has developed and widely disseminated educational and awareness material in several Eritrean languages, including Arabic, Tigre and Tigrigna, and has effectively used radio and television programmes, as well as village meetings, to that end.

Ninth, the Malaria Control Programme has also established a close collaborative relationship with relevant Eritrean ministries including, in particular, the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment, and Land and Water, as well as the Meteorological Department, to ensure appropriate surveillance and to develop sensitive forecasting methods.

In its effort to control the scourge, the Government of Eritrea has been cooperating with, and has received assistance from the United States Agency for International Development, for its entomological research programme, an Italian cooperation project, the World Health Organization (WHO) for the Roll Back Malaria programme, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for the protection of children and those countries which are supporting the HAMSET Disease Control Project, which deals with HIV/AIDS, malaria, sexually transmitted diseases and tuberculosis.

However, Eritrea recognizes that if the campaign against malaria is to succeed, it must transcend national boundaries and benefit from the creation of effective cooperative regional mechanisms, strategies and programmes. These are not yet in place.

Needless to say, the Eritrean Government will steadfastly pursue the goals it has set for itself in its five-year plan, which ends in 2005. The mission is great and the challenges and obstacles are many. Yet, they would not be insurmountable if there were to be peace with justice, peace based on the rule of law,

peace respecting good neighbourliness and peace anchored in good faith and trust. Unfortunately, the chances of achieving these ideals, too, seems to be remote.

Mr. Rajalingam (Fiji): Fiji commends the Secretary-General for the excellent report contained in document A/58/136, entitled "2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa", and supports its recommendations.

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has touched all corners of the globe. Its effects have devastated families, economies and Governments. Whole generations may be lost before we totally recover. Likewise, development strides gained in recent decades have been rolled back. Less mentioned but no less intense in its devastation is malaria.

Malaria continues to plague parts of our region. Although our statistics seem relatively less alarming than other regions, they have attracted global attention and resources. We do not believe this statistical indicator to be cause for complacency in taking preventative measures to ensure it does not reach pandemic proportions. Nor indeed should a complacent attitude cause malaria to revisit those countries in the region, such as Fiji, that have successfully rid its citizens of this disease. Sadly, tuberculosis is one such ravaging disease that has returned.

We acknowledge the intensive efforts of the World Health Organization (WHO) in controlling this disease as well as member Governments' initiatives to fight the scourge. The WHO report contained in document A/58/136 is meticulous in its detail and statistics. We are encouraged to see that the plan of action to roll back malaria is global in perspective and embraces all countries and regions, irrespective of size or extent of the endemic malaria. In our region, we feel confident that the malaria project allocation of the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria will make a significant difference towards reaching the objectives of the global programme.

Developing countries are particularly vulnerable to the onset of any epidemic. They lack the industrial base for pharmaceutical production to meet demands and lack readily available financial resources to buy the necessary pharmaceutical products from manufacturers. Typically, when a disease reaches epidemic proportions, it is also accompanied by

opportunistic, often deadly, companion infections or diseases which are equally potent in impact.

The WHO report has allowed us to reflect on the grim picture of the malaria pandemic in Africa. Alongside the plaguing effects of HIV/AIDS in Africa, clearly the eradication, or at least alleviation of such pandemics depends on development. The Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is only one avenue — groundbreaking as it is — that is making it possible for African countries to access funds for malarial control commensurate with the severity of their needs.

Clearly, the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development could strengthen this fight. Other financing alternatives, such as debt swaps, form a sound basis for consideration by the United Nations and WHO, in partnership with the Bretton Woods institutions. The private sector and industry need to nurture and contribute to this programme.

The contributions of non-governmental organizations are also acknowledged. Assistance provided by non-governmental organizations such as the Sovereign Military Order of Malta, in setting up sleeping sickness clinics in the Southern Sudanese town of Yei, is noteworthy.

Many other contagious and preventable diseases are affecting developing countries. In Fiji, filariasis, dengue, leprosy and diabetes have ravaging impacts and the incidence of tuberculosis is increasing. Care, treatment and upstream prevention need to be extensively addressed by WHO and other stakeholders.

Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti): With the advent of information technology and instant communications, our world appears to have gone from a state of information awareness and knowledge, to one of information overload and virtual ignorance. Consequently, many concerns deserving the attention of the international community are driven from public view in the competition for attention being waged by a vast number of issues. The global fight against terrorism in all its various forms, the recent wars in Asia, particularly in Afghanistan and Iraq, and those plaguing the continent of Africa, as well as the spreading scourge of the HIV/AIDS crisis, are but a few of the more pressing issues which have combined to push malaria below the radar of public concern. Not

surprisingly therefore, the disease remains a dangerous threat to millions of people.

The effort to combat malaria figures prominently in the Millennium Development Goals, which seek to halt and reverse the incidence of this disease and other major diseases by 2015.

The General Assembly, by its resolution 57/294, declared 2001-2010 as the "Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa". The resolution called for support of the Secretary General's recommendations, contained in document A/57/123. What we are seeking in this and other relevant meetings is an update on the status of the implementation of the recommendations in the General Assembly resolution.

Implementing the recommendations would, of course, take place in a real-world situation, and here the actual facts are startling. The latest report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Millennium Declaration highlights disturbing statistics relating particularly to sub-Saharan Africa. Clearly, Africa represents the major focus of the malaria crisis.

To its credit, Africa has recognized that fact. The Abuja Declaration of 2000 set targets and called on African States and their partners to allocate new resources — at least \$1 billion per year — for combating the disease. The Africa malaria report of 2003 was released on 25 April 2003, Africa Malaria Day, and took stock of the malaria situation.

Obviously, funds set aside for malaria must increase. A meagre \$200 million was spent worldwide in 2002, as against the \$1 billion recommended for Africa alone. But perhaps more critical than the sheer provision of funds is the need for Governments in Africa to be engaged and to enhance the capacity of manpower. The international community must transfer new technology to developing countries, particularly for the production of long-lasting insecticide nets, and ways must be found to increase the availability of combination drugs for multi-drug-resistant malaria.

As with HIV/AIDS, the roles of both prevention and treatment loom large for malaria. It appears that thousands of lives can be saved, particularly children, simply through the effective use of insecticide-treated bed nets. Usage is restricted, however, due to the high cost of those nets. Those costs could be lowered by a reduction in the high tariffs and taxes levied on them

within Africa. With the resulting lower prices, more people would be able to afford the nets, which would stimulate market potential for commercial production. The result would be a low cost but highly effective method for reducing the incidence of malaria among users.

The report of the Secretary-General is quite positive about the potential of long-lasting insecticidal nets, which are factory pre-treated and require no further treatment during a projected four to five years of usage. While the nets are considered to be a major breakthrough in the prevention of malaria, global production is inadequate. The report recommends that an additional five to ten factories be constructed in Africa at strategic locations in the next few years. Even more promising, the long-lasting insecticide nets are made from polymers derived from petroleum. Oil companies in Africa could therefore be encouraged to make those polymers available either free or at a low cost.

The importance of long-lasting insecticide nets rises considerably when we examine the growing immunity and resistance of malaria parasites, particularly to the major malaria drug, chloroquine. Developing new treatments are therefore critical. The World Health Organization recommends the use of artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT), which appears very promising aside from its relatively high cost and limited operational experience in Africa. One pharmaceutical company is said to be making ACT available at cost. Others must follow, along with donor Governments, to explore strategies for making ACT available at the lowest cost.

For many reasons, people in sub-Saharan Africa cover the cost of malaria prevention and treatment out of their own pockets. More important though, is the fact that, given the inevitably low level of knowledge, awareness and information — all tied to poor communications and public education — there is little guidance on quality, safety or appropriateness. Public education is critical.

Perhaps the essential fact to note is the conclusion of the Secretary General's report that malaria is treatable, preventable and curable. That can be seen by the zero- to low-level incidence in many areas of the world where malaria has been eradicated. Major advances are possible in many countries simply by utilizing existing tools. Developing new tools, such

as a vaccine, deserves continued support, although they may be years away. While progress is being made, measured against our targets and recommendations, it is too slow. The creation of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is a major breakthrough and holds the potential of access to funds for malaria control commensurate with needs. Such funds would be well spent given that macro-economic analysis indicates that the net return on investment in malaria control is substantial and far exceeds the initial investment in terms of improved economic performance and reduced poverty.

Finally, it would be a travesty to discuss the prevention and treatment of malaria in Africa without noting the remarkable private efforts of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. While it is true that the Foundation is the most highly funded in the world, what stands out is not the size of the largesse of those individuals but the intensity of their personal focus and concern for the lives and well-being of the global poor. As one American newspaper notes, the Gates have placed huge bets on big, difficult scientific problems. They have committed more than \$126 million to finding an AIDS vaccine and have put some \$150 million into the development of a malaria drug. Recently, they personally trekked to a remote clinic in Mozambique to announce the largest grant in history for malaria research, using the occasion to highlight malaria's toll of more than 1 million children dead each year, mostly in Africa. They recently awarded a \$28 million grant for a huge series of tests for a technique which, if successful, could cut malaria deaths by half in Africa.

Understandably, much of the world shares with the Gates a lack of understanding about why other people and their Governments do not share their sense of urgency. We hope more Governments and organizations will join this noble cause to eradicate one of humanity's scourges from the face of the earth.

Mr. Zenna (Ethiopia): At the outset, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation and thanks to the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report entitled "2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa" (A/58/136 and Corr.1). My delegation fully concurs with the recommendations contained therein.

It goes without saying that Africa, the most marginalized region in the world, suffers from various

social and economic deprivations which claim the lives of millions of people each year. Also, it has always been the case that dismal economic growth, hunger, famine and disease are customary terms to describe the misery of this continent.

When one speaks of diseases in Africa, it is hardly possible to fail to mention malaria. Although malaria is a global health problem, it remains the disease of the impoverished, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa. The major changes in the eco-epidemiological system that frequently occur in different parts of the continent, the premature termination or unplanned interruption of antimalarial measures in epidemic-prone areas and population movements due to the requirements of seasonal workers, refugees or migration for different reasons are the major causes of the outbreak of this epidemic in the region.

Ethiopia is no different from other African countries that are severely affected by the disease. The epidemic has proved to be a major public health and economic problem in Ethiopia, in which 40 million people are at risk of the disease, with approximately 4 to 5 million cases reported annually. The disease is on the top of the list of the major killer diseases in the country and accounts for a significant number of outpatients. Recurring large-scale drought and subsequent malnutrition seem to create a conducive environment for the onset and spread of the epidemic in various regions of the country. According to a high-level delegation of the World Health Organization that recently visited the drought-affected areas in Ethiopia, the onset of the malaria epidemic will increase during the next couple of months. Furthermore, according to the same report, if the proper measures are not taken, tens of thousands of people will certainly die of the epidemic.

In an effort to combat the spread of this epidemic, the Government, to the best of its resource capability, is trying to take the necessary measures. In addition to having signed on to the global campaign to fight malaria, it has launched its own five-year country strategic plan for malaria control. In collaboration with international organizations such as the World Health Organization, UNICEF and others, efforts are under way to target the most vulnerable section of the population, namely pregnant women and children in rural areas, and launch a wider campaign to fight the spread of the epidemic. The Secretary-General's report states that "the bottlenecks that impede effective

resource flows for malaria have now been identified and malaria control is back on the Government agenda" (A/58/136, para 21).

Apart from what I briefly touched on at the beginning of my speech about the difficulties that our continent of Africa is facing, the pain and sacrifice in overcoming the horrific situation in the region is becoming unbearable. Being aware of this menace, the international community, at the dawn of the new millennium, has taken the initiative of alleviating the major challenges that impede the growth of the region by setting various development goals. To that end, diseases that are pervading the African region have been recognized as barriers that hamper prosperity. Accordingly, the international community has stressed the importance of solidarity in tackling the problem. That commitment to mitigate the effects of the epidemic is embodied in the Millennium Development Goals. The establishment of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is an important and encouraging endeavour by the international community to support poor countries in their effort to make progress in malaria control. Ethiopia, one of the beneficiaries of the Global Fund, calls on the international community, especially partners among the developed countries, to increase the flow of financial support to the Fund. We believe that such cooperation is in line with the political commitment of our partners to help realize the dream of stopping the global spread of malaria.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): We have heard the last speaker on this item. The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 51.

Agenda item 160

Global road safety crisis

The report of the Secretary-General (A/58/228)

Draft resolution A/58/L.3

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I now call on the representative of Oman to introduce draft resolution A/58/L.3.

Mr. Al-Hinai (Oman): The General Assembly is for the very first time discussing another rapidly growing epidemic — that of global road traffic deaths

and injuries. The Secretary-General's report (A/58/228) contains very alarming statistics. It was just over a hundred years ago that the first road traffic death occurred. Today, approximately 3,000 people worldwide are killed daily as a result of road crashes, while thousands more are injured, some never again to lead productive lives. It is also alarming that this burden falls disproportionately on developing countries, where roads are becoming more congested with vehicles and people every day.

But, let us not lose hope. The battle is not lost. We can do something about it. I am optimistic that we can get this plague under control. I am optimistic for two reasons: first, because we have an unprecedented understanding of the dynamics of road crashes and, secondly, because we have a broad range of effective interventions to prevent them.

Let me first say a word about the predicted rapid rate of increase in road deaths in the developing world. This is a man-made plague, and we understand very well why the deaths and injuries have been increasing in low- and middle-income countries. What makes this plague different from AIDS and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) is that we can both understand and control this problem.

In developing countries, the victims of road crashes are the most vulnerable people, the vulnerable road users. Most of the victims of road traffic injuries and deaths are pedestrians, a contrast to the situation in developed countries, where the victims are mostly the drivers and passengers of automobiles. Owing to the stricter manufacturing standards imposed on car manufacturers in the developed countries, those passengers and drivers are actually very well protected by the steel frame of the vehicles in which they are riding.

In developing countries, pedestrians and bicyclists are the most vulnerable road users; they have no protection. Mothers carrying babies walk between rapidly moving buses, cars and trucks, while traffic signs, which are rare, are often ignored even when present.

Cars in developing countries are much more likely to kill a person than cars in the developed countries. In some developing countries, cars are up to 200 times more lethal than in developed countries. Further, we also know that car manufacturers plan to increase production and exports to the developing

world. As the number of vehicles increase, so will the number of deaths and injuries — unless we take action.

From this, we can understand the rate of growth of this epidemic. It is a scientific fact that we live in a world that is based on cause and effect. When we understand the causes, we can control the effects. In this case, we understand exactly what is behind the increasing rates of death, and that gives us an advantage in addressing the problem. Hence, my first reason for optimism.

The second reason for my optimism is the new way of thinking about road safety. The historical view had been that the way to prevent traffic deaths was simply to warn drivers and pedestrians to be careful. We thought that prevention meant getting the word out to people and educating them about safe procedures. In that view, education was really the only tool we had for prevention. We now realize that there are many other actions we can take, and that responsibility rests not only with individuals, but it should be a responsibility shared across many sectors and levels in our countries.

A more advanced approach to road safety has been developed, one that recognizes that the driver, the vehicle and infrastructure are three components of a dynamic system. That approach recognizes that there are many things we can do to prevent road crashes. A systems-based approach seeks to identify all the sources of error and design that contribute to road crashes, and then tries to mitigate the consequences. That systems-based approach suggests that, first, we can look at roadways and make changes. For example, pedestrians and people in non-motorized vehicles are not separated from fast-moving traffic. Many roads do not have barriers, or even white lines down the middle, to separate lanes of traffic. Communities should have roadways that circle villages or towns, rather than just pass right through them. Blind spots that limit visibility can be eliminated, and rumble strips can be added to roads to reduce speed.

Next, we can make design changes in vehicles. Many vehicles may be very old and lacking safety features such as collapsible steering columns and engine blocks that absorb impacts by crushing like an accordion. Those features — and others such as seatbelts, child-safety seats, airbags and lights to increase visibility — can be added to modifications to the front ends of vehicles to minimize injury to pedestrians.

We can also look at human behaviour and make changes. Laws can be written and enforced that severely penalize drivers for speeding or driving under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Laws and their enforcement can be supported, starting at the top levels of Governments and down through community levels, and taught at an early age in school.

On behalf of its sponsors — Algeria, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, China, Cuba, Ecuador, Grenada, Iran, Kuwait, Lebanon, Malaysia, Pakistan, Panama, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Sudan, Switzerland, Syria, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, the United States, Yemen and Oman — I now have the honour to introduce the draft resolution on the global road safety crisis, which is contained in document A/58/L.3. Since the issuance of the draft resolution, the following additional countries have joined the list of sponsors: Armenia, Argentina, Belgium, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, France, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Kenya, Nauru, Portugal, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Singapore and Trinidad and Tobago.

In order to raise greater awareness of the magnitude of the road-traffic injury problem, the sponsors are calling for a plenary meeting of the General Assembly to be held on 14 April 2004 to bring together Government representatives and experts to discuss this issue. That meeting will be held in conjunction with World Health Day, which will be observed on the 7 April 2004, and the World Health Organization's launching on that day of its *World Report on Road Traffic Injury Prevention*.

In conjunction with that plenary meeting, the sponsors are requesting that a meeting be organized to allow the private sector, relevant non-governmental organizations, members of civil society and other interested parties to exchange information on best practices regarding road safety. The sponsors are also calling for the Economic and Social Council to facilitate the exchange of information on best practices regarding road safety and to make recommendations for road traffic injury control. It is expected that the outcome of the exchange of information between the Economic and Social Council's regional commissions and other relevant organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and the exchange of views that will take place at the 14 April 2004 meeting will form the basis of the report of the Secretary-General to be

submitted to the General Assembly at its sixtieth session.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the representatives who participated in the many informal meetings we held and who offered constructive suggestions, amendments and advice.

I am honoured to recommend draft resolution A/58/L.3 for adoption by the General Assembly.

In conclusion, catastrophic road crashes are not a necessary product of development. Motorized vehicles represent positive progress for people and allow us to develop economically and as a society. We can ensure that, as our nations move people and goods to foster development and commerce, we do it safely. For my delegation, this represents an extraordinary opportunity for all of us to help reach that goal — an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of men, women and children around the world.

Mr. Suhaili (Malaysia): At the outset, my delegation would like to commend the delegation of Oman for its initiative in raising this important question as an agenda item of the General Assembly. We extend our sincere appreciation in particular to Ambassador Fuad Al-Hinai, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations, for his untiring efforts and dedication in pursuing this matter. My delegation would also like to acknowledge the role and contributions of Member States and relevant agencies of the United Nations, non-governmental organizations and members of civil society to this initiative. We welcome the publication of the inaugural report of the Secretary-General on the global road safety crisis (A/58/228). We support the recommendations contained in the report, most of which have been, and are being, implemented by Malaysia.

According to statistics compiled by the World Health Organization (WHO), road traffic accidents worldwide have resulted in the deaths of over 1 million people and caused injury and disability to more than 10 million others on an annual basis. In 2000 road traffic accidents constituted the ninth leading cause of death. Such a horrific situation affects both developed and developing countries. However, 88 per cent of those deaths and injuries have occurred in developing countries. Furthermore, it is estimated that at least 6 million people will die and 60 million others will be injured or disabled in developing countries over the

next 10 years as a result of road traffic accidents. Those figures warrant serious and urgent attention and a concerted global effort to tackle and reverse such a largely preventable cause of death and injury.

In Malaysia over 200,000 cases of road traffic accidents were reported in 2002 alone. Those cases resulted in the loss of nearly 6,000 Malaysian lives. The fatality rate due to these accidents in 2002 stood at a rate of 4.9 deaths per 10,000 registered vehicles. Consequently, total losses to the gross national product arising from that situation amounted to \$1.42 billion.

The Government of Malaysia has maintained a long-standing and abiding commitment to address this problem, in the interest of saving lives and managing valuable resources required for development. The National Road Safety Council of Malaysia was established in 1962. Through the National Council, the Government of Malaysia continues to undertake various efforts to reduce the number of road traffic accidents and to promote road traffic safety consciousness among road users and the general public. The Council has set a target of reducing fatalities to a rate of 4 per 10,000 registered vehicles by 2010. In pursuing that objective, in 1997 Malaysia launched a nationwide road traffic safety campaign and awareness programme premised on the concept of the "three Es", which stands for education, enforcement and engineering. That campaign has been quite effective in reducing the number of road accident fatalities to 5,886 deaths in 2002. Malaysia will continue to make serious efforts to further reduce that figure.

Aside from efforts at the national level, Malaysia is an active participant at the regional and international levels in formulating strategies for the development and sustainability of road infrastructure. Among other things, those strategies are aimed at reducing road traffic accidents by constructing better, safer and more road user-friendly infrastructure and by promoting and ensuring efficient maintenance of road infrastructure. Malaysia is involved in the World Bank Group's Global Road Safety Partnership, the World Road Association, the Land Transport and Safety Committee of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the Road Engineering Association of Asia and Australasia and ASEAN's Sub-working Group on Road Transport and Road Safety. We believe that the consultations in, and experiences gained through, those and other forums have, and will continue to be, useful in the collective efforts to address this issue at the

regional and international levels. That would also be in accordance with one of the conclusions contained in the report of the Secretary-General submitted under this item.

The statistics on deaths, injuries and disabilities caused by road traffic accidents must be a cause of grave concern to us. They are a burden on our human conscience and a subject of concern because of their destructive and multidimensional impact on the economic and social well-being of our societies. The loss of even one human life and the disabilities caused by road traffic accidents have a rippling negative effect on individuals, families and societies. It is equally heart-rending for anyone to learn of the loss of dear friends and family members — be it a teenager involved in an illegal motorcycle race on the streets of Kuala Lumpur, a family returning from vacation somewhere in Greece or a busload of passengers killed in a ravine somewhere in Pakistan. Initially, such accidents immediately and drastically affect family and social units, both emotionally and psychologically. Subsequently they have a gradual effect on the larger community and on the country as a whole, owing to the human, economic and social losses involved.

According to studies conducted by the World Health Organization, Harvard University and the World Bank, it is anticipated that by 2020, if left unchecked, road traffic accidents will advance to become the second leading cause of death and disability in the world. The inclusion of this item in the agenda of the General Assembly is very timely, especially given that road safety will be the theme and focus of World Health Day in 2004. Malaysia supports the adoption of that theme to mark the start of a global campaign for road traffic safety. We also support the draft resolution before the Assembly on this item.

Road traffic accidents have affected, and continue to affect, each and every one of us in one way or another. The United Nations has an important role to play in leading international efforts to address this highly preventable but deadly public safety problem. Rest assured that, within our means and capacity, Malaysia stands committed to make its contribution in that regard.

Mr. Zhang Yishan (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation supports the consideration by the current session of the General Assembly of the agenda item entitled "Global road safety crisis". I wish

to avail myself of this opportunity to register our gratitude to the Permanent Mission of Oman for this initiative. I would also like to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for the informative report (A/58/228) that he has submitted to the General Assembly under this item.

According to the report of the Secretary-General, road traffic injuries have become a public health crisis of global dimensions. In 2000, 1.26 million people worldwide died as a result of road traffic injuries, accounting for 2.2 per cent of global mortality and ranking as the ninth leading cause of human death and morbidity. The World Health Organization (WHO) predicts that by 2020 road traffic injuries could rank third among the causes of death and disability, ahead of HIV/AIDS and malaria.

A cause of concern is the fact that the losses sustained by developing countries as a result of road traffic injuries far exceed those of developed countries. Of the 1.26 million road traffic fatalities in 2000, about 1.04 million occurred in developing countries, which translates into 88 per cent of the total number of deaths, whereas developed countries accounted for only 12 per cent. Faced with that grave situation, it stands to reason that the international community should enhance cooperation and endeavour to improve road safety in all countries, and in developing countries in particular. In that context, I wish to make four points.

First, ensuring road safety is a systemic undertaking that involves human beings, vehicles, roads, the environment and management. In formulating specific laws, policies and measures in an effort to eradicate causes of road traffic injuries, countries should take into account the overall picture and a whole range of factors.

Secondly, given that national Governments bear the primary responsibility for road safety, they should give priority to preventive interventions. In doing so, they should rely on the participation and collaboration of all sectors of society; heighten the safety awareness of relevant Government departments, transportation authorities and the general public; and ensure road safety.

Thirdly, it is imperative to effectively beef up international cooperation. Countries should increase their exchange of information, learn from one another and join their efforts to improve road safety. Because

developing countries suffer from economic constraints and their infrastructure and management techniques are yet to be perfected, the international community should provide them with the necessary financial, technical and managerial assistance.

Fourthly, the World Health Organization (WHO), which shoulders the weighty responsibility of keeping everyone in good health, should play an important role in coping with this problem. We have noted with pleasure that WHO has chosen the theme of road safety for World Health Day 2004. It is our hope that the events surrounding World Health Day will serve to further heighten public attention to road safety in all countries and make travelling a safer and more comfortable experience.

China is a developing country. Along with the sustained healthy growth of the Chinese economy over the past two decades, China's road construction and automobile industry have made significant headway. Questions such as how to try to improve road safety conditions, accelerate legislation on road safety, increase input in highway and urban road safety facilities, intensify the training and safety education of drivers, further improve road traffic accident prevention mechanisms and upgrade the treatment and rehabilitation of those injured in traffic accidents are major challenges facing the Chinese Government. We hope to enhance cooperation with the WHO and other international organizations and agencies, draw on the advanced experience of other countries and scale new heights in China's road safety capacity-building endeavours.

Mr. Vargas (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank the Permanent Mission of Oman for assuming this important initiative.

In the early days of the automobile, some people made fun of those slow moving vehicles by calling out "hitch a horse to it" as they passed by. Others welcomed the prospect that such an innovative machine would put an end to the reckless behaviour of horsemen who dashed down streets in full gallop, thereby endangering pedestrians. Over 100 years have lapsed since then, and both jokes and hopes have literally been run over by the almost unmanageable road crisis that, to one degree or another, affects all the countries of the world and whose consequences are reflected in alarming statistics.

Traffic accidents are today responsible for the disability of approximately 30 million people and cause more than 3 million deaths per year. Those numbers have made traffic accidents the principal cause for the loss of potential life-years. Road accidents require \$500 billion annually in medical services and are responsible for a loss in productivity amounting to about 1 per cent of a country's gross domestic product. Nevertheless, those statistics do not begin to quantify the dimensions of individual and familial tragedies caused by traffic accidents, of which all of us have been, or may potentially be, victims.

Traffic accidents generate and multiply exponentially the complex sources of violence. They harm the economy and the environment and have damaging physical and psychological effects on human beings, as well as on such social and cultural values as security and solidarity and on efforts to improve quality of life.

The lack of road safety long ago ceased to be a problem of the developed world alone or a phenomenon limited to large urban centres. In my country, for example, the motorization index is growing exponentially, thereby increasing the risk of traffic accidents and producing a worrying rise in the emission of toxic gases. Between 1981 and 2002 the number of *in situ* deaths grew by 243 per cent. Although the percentage of deaths caused by traffic accident has gradually decreased, that reduction was not due to a net drop in the actual number of deaths but to the fact that there are currently many more non-fatal accidents. The number of accidents has doubled in the past 10 years, totalling 64,440 in the year 2002. For a nation of fewer than 4 million inhabitants, such numbers indicate that the lack of road safety is a very serious social and public health problem affecting mostly children, students and the majority of the economically active segment of the population.

For generations, road safety strategies have followed the traditional model of the "four Es". That model corresponds to the English words enforcement, engineering, education and emergency; in other words, to the laws pertaining to those words. However, it is necessary to expand that traditional model to include new, complementary strategies. With regard to Costa Rica itself, our road transit authorities are making strenuous efforts to refocus their work and achieve more concrete and effective results.

In that regard, my country has incorporated several new elements in its effort to achieve road safety as part of an approach that brings together various perspectives, policies, strategies, resources and expertise. Against that backdrop, in promoting road safety it is essential to take into account specific geographic, demographic, cultural and climatic characteristics. It is also essential to involve local governments, civil society and the private sector in devising and implementing road safety policies. Local management of road safety must result in the putting in place by the users of the road system itself of participatory approaches to the design, implementation, monitoring, control and evaluation of plans and programmes in the area road safety that take into account the local environment. Moreover, given the dynamic character of the road safety problem, it is necessary to decentralize the taking of political, technical and financial decisions.

I would in particular like to emphasize the importance of putting a human face on engineering. The decision-making process regarding the implementation of civil engineering work must take into account the particularities and special needs of the most vulnerable users of the transit system. Among other things, sustainable road safety requires the development of a road system defined by the abilities of the users of those roads. In that connection, a road system should not be more complicated than what the least competent user can negotiate. That is an idea we must consider.

From its earliest beginnings, the automobile was conceived as a tool in the service of human beings that would save time, physical effort and economic resources, not as an end in itself — and much less as a weapon of mass destruction. Let us join efforts to ensure that road transportation once again becomes a means of safely and quickly reaching a destination, and not an ongoing threat to every child and adult.

In conclusion, in addition to expressing our gratitude to the Secretary-General for his report on the global road safety crisis (A/58/223), I would once again like to thank the delegation of Oman for its leadership in the preparation of the draft resolution on this item, which we are happy to sponsor.

Mr. Mantovani (Italy): I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the European Union. The acceding countries of Cyprus, the Czech Republic,

Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, the associated countries of Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey and the Economic Free Trade Association countries of Iceland and Liechtenstein align themselves with this statement.

The European Union welcomes the report of the Secretary-General (A/58/228) on the need for a global effort to raise awareness about the health impact and social and economic costs of road traffic crashes and injuries. The magnitude of the burden posed by road traffic injuries is reflected by the figures cited in the report of the World Health Organization (WHO). It is also clear that this public health problem has a major effect on low- and middle-income countries and that it considerably undermines the achievement of sustainable development.

Despite the gravity of this public health problem, we are convinced that a great deal can be done to prevent and reduce road traffic injuries. Accidents on the roads are preventable, and their impact on society can be reduced by the political commitment of national Governments.

We can also do more on an international level to address this problem. To that end, we call for efforts by the United Nations system to support the development of policies on road safety and to promote the integration of road safety concerns into all relevant national policies — including those that relate to women, children and the elderly — within the overall framework of sustainable development. In that context the United Nations Development Programme, the WHO, the World Bank and UNICEF, as well as the regional development banks, should be called upon to play a major role through the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper process. The United Nations system can also contribute by providing assistance in the critical area of data collection. In that respect, the European Union welcomes the initiative by the WHO to designate road safety as the theme for World Health Day, which will be celebrated in Paris on 7 April 2004.

The European Union attaches great importance to the problem of road safety. That commitment is reflected in the European Commission's recent adoption of its European road safety action programme for the period 2003 — 2010, which aims at halving the number of road accident victims in the European Community as a whole by 2010. The same action

programme provides for the establishment of a European road safety observatory within the Commission.

The problem of road safety is on the agenda of the European Union. The ministries of transportation of the member States of the European Union will gather in Verona, Italy, in the next few days to discuss priority action lines in order to improve and harmonize security standards in Europe.

The European Union believes that saving human lives through an effective road safety policy is a difficult challenge, but it is also a moral obligation for all Member States.

Finally, speaking in my national capacity, let me add that Italy is ready to join the list of sponsors to draft resolution A/58/L.3, on the global road safety crisis.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.